

Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline

The Late Byzantine period (1261–1453) is marked by a paradoxical discrepancy between economic weakness and cultural strength. The apparent enigma can be resolved by recognizing that later Byzantine diplomatic strategies, despite or because of diminishing political advantage, relied on an increasingly desirable cultural and artistic heritage. This book reassesses the role of the visual arts in this era by examining the imperial image and the gift as reconceived in the final two centuries of the Byzantine Empire. In particular, it traces a series of luxury objects created specifically for diplomatic exchange with such courts as Genoa, Paris, and Moscow alongside key examples of imperial imagery and ritual. By questioning how political decline reconfigured the visual culture of empire, Professor Hilsdale offers a more nuanced and dynamic account of medieval cultural exchange that considers the temporal dimensions of power and the changing fates of empires.

CECILY J. HILSDALE is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. Her research concerns cultural exchange in the medieval Mediterranean, in particular the circulation of Byzantine luxury objects as diplomatic gifts, as well as the related dissemination of eastern styles, techniques, iconographies, and ideologies of *imperium*.

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CECILY J. HILSDALE



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This book offers a critical reappraisal of the visual arts in the final centuries of the Byzantine Empire. As such, it owes a great debt to the “Byzantium: Faith and Power” exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2004 and the scholarly momentum that followed in its wake. It was this exhibition that prompted me to reframe my longstanding interests in art and diplomacy around the question of decline in the later Byzantine period. But the thinking that led to this reframing and to the refining of this book’s central thematics would not have been possible without the intellectual generosity, interest, and engagement that developed through sustained dialogue with a range of peers and mentors. Though it is not possible to list all of those who have in some way influenced this project, special mention goes to Nell Andrew, Jennifer Ball, Charles Barber, Elena Boeck, Sarah Brooks, Annemarie Weyl Carr, Kristen Collins, Sally Cornelison, Anthony Cutler, Antony Eastmond, Helen Evans, Hannah Feldman, Megan Holmes, Anthony Kaldellis, Holger Klein, Aden Kumler, Christopher MacEvitt, Ruth Macrides, Kathleen Maxwell, Margaret Mullett, Bob Ousterhout, Maria Parani, Georgi Parpulov, Glenn Peers, Daniel Richter, Nancy Ševčenko, Alice-Mary Talbot, Allie Terry-Fritsch, Thelma Thomas, Galina Tirnanic, Alicia Walker, Warren Woodfin, and last but certainly not least Ann Marie Yasin, who has been a constant source of support and inspiration.

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Although the book took on its final form at McGill, its roots reach back further than I would like to admit, to the myriad graduate seminars on Byzantine art at the University of Chicago offered by Robert S. Nelson, my *doktorvater* who, quite frankly, taught me most of what I know about Byzantium. Although this book bears only a loose connection to the dissertation I wrote under his direction, it was through his discipline, combined with the intellectually stimulating environment of the University of Chicago, that my

practice was shaped and the foundation for my current trajectory was laid out firmly. I would like to acknowledge my other mentors there as well: the late Michael Camille for his gleeful excitement about all things medieval, Walter Kaegi for his comprehensive introduction to Byzantine historiography, Tom Cummins for his wicked wit and anthropological rigor, and, especially, Linda Seidel for serving as an inspiration in so many ways and for insisting that I never lose sight of the stakes of an argument. At the University of Chicago I also benefited from an intellectually generous cohort of fellow Byzantinists, many of whom continue to serve as the most challenging and supportive of interlocutors. The late Angela Volan in particular deserves special mention: although her brilliance was cut tragically short, her memory lives on.

Byzantine texts are fond of expressing gratitude through insufficiency. Seldom are words capable of capturing the magnitude of a sentiment; words fall short where gratitude is beyond measure. For gifts that should never be measured but hopefully reciprocated in some small way, I thank Jonathan Sachs most of all, and I eagerly await the new chapter in our lives that has begun with the little *belette* growing inside me as I type.

Abbreviations

<i>ArtB</i>	<i>Art Bulletin</i>
<i>ArtH</i>	<i>Art History</i>
<i>BFP</i>	<i>Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)</i> , ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
<i>BMFD</i>	<i>Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments</i> , ed. John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000).
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BSI</i>	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
<i>ByzF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers archéologiques</i>
<i>DOC</i>	<i>Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection</i> , edited by A. R. Bellinger, P. Grierson, and M. F. Hendy (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1966–99)
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>ΔΧΑΕ</i>	<i>Deltion tes Christianikes Archaialogikes Hetaireias</i>
<i>ΕΕΒΣ</i>	<i>Epeteris Hetaireias Byzantinon Spoudon</i>
<i>ΕΗΒ</i>	<i>The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century</i> , edited by Angeliki E. Laiou (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002)
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JÖBG</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia christiana periodica</i>
<i>ODB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , edited by A. Kazhdan <i>et al.</i> (Oxford University Press, 1991)
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca</i> , edited by J.-P. Migne (Paris: Garnier, 1857–66)
<i>PLP</i>	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , edited by E. Trapp <i>et al.</i> (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976–96)

<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>RESEE</i>	<i>Revue des études sud-est européennes</i>
<i>RN</i>	<i>Revue numismatique</i>

Introduction: the imperial image as gift

As Latin Crusaders gazed intently at the city of Constantinople for the first time in June 1203, Geoffroi de Villehardouin claimed that there was “no man so brave and daring that his flesh did not shudder at the sight.”¹ Even docked at a distance from the illustrious Byzantine capital on the Bosphoros, rich palaces and tall churches could be seen beyond the city’s famed lofty walls and towers. While Constantinople had held a privileged position in the medieval Mediterranean as the center of luxury, learning, and holy Christian relics since its foundation by Constantine the Great in the fourth century, the arrival and subsequent conquests of the Crusaders inaugurated a new era for the capital and the larger empire. After more than half a century of Latin occupation (1204–61), which included the massive exportation of the city’s most precious treasures, the Byzantines reclaimed Constantinople. But the reconquest came at a great cost, and scholars have generally characterized the subsequent two centuries as a period of decline marked by political fragility and economic scarcity.

In contrast to the awe of the European Crusaders, expressed in such visceral terms by Villehardouin, over a century later in the mid-fourteenth century, Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras lamented the diminished circumstances of his once-celebrated capital. After the coronation of Byzantine Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos in 1347, Gregoras observed that there was nothing left in the imperial treasury “but air and dust and, as they say, the atoms of Epicurus.”² Nostalgic laments such as this have shaped not only contemporary perceptions but also most modern scholarly assessments of what has come to be known as the Late Byzantine or Palaiologan period, or the period between the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople in 1261 and the final conquest of the city by the Ottomans in 1453. Nostalgia is a seductive sentiment. How can we not be moved by the fact that the Late Byzantine imperial crown worn by John VI at his coronation was inlaid with

¹ *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Margaret Shaw (Harmondsworth, 1963), 59.

² Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, vol. II (Bonn, 1829–55), 790: καὶ πλὴν ἀέρος καὶ κόνεως καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων εἰπεῖν ἀτόμων.

mere colored glass, the original gems having been pawned to the Republic of Venice earlier in the century?³

Notions of decline and twilight, however, overshadow a reality of more nuanced cultural relations during the Palaiologan period. In the face of this economic and political adversity, classical education and intellectual life flourished. Indeed, even in lamenting the sad state of the treasury, Gregoras betrays his learned status and his ties to a long Hellenic heritage by describing bankruptcy (emptiness) in Epicurean terms. The visual arts thrived as well, as testified, for instance, by the celebrated mosaics and frescoes of Constantinople's Church of the Chora and the myriad icons and precious portable objects brought together in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2004 exhibition "Byzantium: Faith and Power, 1261–1557."⁴ The unsurpassed vibrancy of Byzantine art during this period has often been described, although somewhat problematically, as a "Palaiologan Renaissance," and a spate of recent exhibitions have paid tribute to the artistic traditions of later Byzantium on a grand scale.⁵ In celebrating the visual culture of the final two centuries of Byzantium, an acknowledgment of the empire's diminished political and economic standing serves only to highlight the very strengths of its artistic traditions. Despite poverty and political fragility, the arts of the era held together the larger Orthodox *oikoumene*.⁶

³ The crown jewels were held in the Treasury of San Marco as a guarantee of a loan that was never repaid. This episode will be discussed at greater length below in the introduction to Part II.

⁴ The 2004 "blockbuster" exhibition "Byzantium: Faith and Power, 1261–1557" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with its sumptuous and weighty exhibition catalog and symposium papers published subsequently, is to be commended for promoting interest in things Palaiologan among both scholars and the general public. See Helen C. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* (New Haven, 2004) (hereafter abbreviated to *BFP*) with accompanying colloquium papers edited by Sarah T. Brooks, *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture* (New Haven, 2006).

⁵ Recent exhibitions at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (2007) and the Royal Academy of Arts in London (2008) included significant later Byzantine material. See Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins (eds.), *Icons from Sinai: Holy Image, Hallowed Ground* (Los Angeles, 2006); and Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki (eds.), *Byzantium, 330–1453* (London, 2008). A number of colloquia and exhibitions have resulted in the main literature on later Byzantine art. See, for example, *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues: Actes du Colloque organisé par l'Association internationale des études byzantines à Venise en septembre 1968* (Venice, 1971); Slobodan Ćurčić and Doula Mouriki (eds.), *The Twilight of Byzantium: Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire: Papers from the Colloquium Held at Princeton University, 8–9 May 1989* (Princeton, 1991); Antonio Iacobini and Mauro della Valle (eds.), *L'arte di Bisanzio e l'Italia al tempo dei Paleologi, 1261–1453* (Papers presented at the Convegno internazionale d'arte bizantina, Rome, 1994) (Rome, 1999 [*Milione* 5]); and the *Byzantium: Faith and Power* exhibition catalogue and accompanying colloquium papers cited in note 4 above.

⁶ Maria Parani's review of the catalogue for the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in *Speculum*, 83(1) (2008), 191–3, characterizes this position well.

This book proceeds from the claim that the arts thrived in the face of political and economic decline, but it further interrogates the particular mechanisms by which the visual arts defined later Byzantium. How and why were certain visual strategies adopted in the face of the decline felt so acutely by Gregoras and other intellectuals of the time? Furthermore, what sort of image did rulers of this impoverished empire cultivate and project to the wider medieval world? Which particular ideological associations to the past were visually cultivated and which were elided?

Although scholars recognize the paradoxical discrepancy between economic weakness and cultural strength during this period, none of them has pursued an explanation for this phenomenon. One way to understand this apparent enigma, this book suggests, is to recognize that later Byzantine diplomatic strategies, despite or because of diminishing political advantage, relied on an increasingly desirable cultural and artistic heritage. In the later Byzantine period, power must, out of economic necessity, be constructed in non-monetary terms within the realm of culture. In an attempt to reassess the role of cultural production in an era most often described in terms of decline, this study focuses on the intersection of two central and related thematics – the imperial image and the gift – as they are reconceived in the final centuries of the Byzantine Empire. Through the analysis of art objects created specifically for diplomatic exchange alongside key examples of Palaiologan imperial imagery and ritual, this book traces the circulation of the image of the emperor – in such sumptuous materials as silk, bronze, gold, and vellum – at the end of the empire.

Drawing on diverse visual and textual materials that have traditionally been eclipsed in favor of the earlier Byzantine period, this book interrogates the manner in which previous visual paradigms of sovereignty and generosity were adapted to suit diminished contemporary realities. It is therefore situated at the convergence of art, empire, and decline. In this way, this book expands discussions of cultural exchange and boundary crossings by prompting us to question how the concept of decline reconfigures categories of wealth and value, categories that lie at the core of cultural exchange.

Pharmakon and apotropaion

In an encomium for Michael VIII Palaiologos, court orator Manuel Holobolos expresses the power of the emperor's image as a gift. According to Holobolos, at the negotiations of the Treaty of Nymphaion through which the Genoese joined forces with Michael Palaiologos with the aim of

recovering Constantinople (1261), the Genoese requested an image of the emperor as a visible expression of protection and love for their city. The imperial image for the Genoese, Holobolos claims, would be a great remedy, a strong defense, an averter, a powerful parapet, a strong tower, and an adamantine wall.⁷ The word choices here are significant. Not only is the imperial image associated with key fortifications to protect a city (parapet, tower, wall), it is also described as a *pharmakon* (φάρμακον) and an *apotropaion* (ἀποτρόπαιον). The former, an ambiguous term, which can be translated in entirely opposite, almost contradictory ways, holds a privileged position in theoretical discussions of gift-giving,⁸ while the latter is suggestive of cult images and amulets. Holobolos thus ascribes to the imperial image an efficacy usually reserved for sacred icons in Byzantium.⁹ The Virgin's icon was understood to be particularly efficacious. The Akathistos Hymn hails the Theotokos as the "impregnable wall of the kingdom . . . through whom trophies are raised up . . . [and] through whom enemies fall," and her icon famously led battles and processions along Constantinople's walls at key perilous moments.¹⁰ In the oration, however, Holobolos is describing the potency of the image of the emperor, not the Virgin, and this raises complicated issues of imperial allegiance and hierarchy.

The imperial image in Byzantium constituted the fundamental visual manifestation of sovereignty, and it often commemorated imperial munificence. In the heart of the empire at Hagia Sophia, the celebrated suite of imperial mosaics on the easternmost wall of the south gallery conveys the broader ideology of imperial largesse through the representation of very

⁷ M. Treu (ed.), *Orationes*, 2 vols. (Potsdam, 1906), 1:46.27–34; and X. A. Siderides, "Μανουήλ Ὀλοβόλου, Ἐγκώμιον εἰς Μιχαὴλ Η' Παλαιολόγον," *EEBS*, 3 (1926), 188: δύνатаί Σου καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν, ἂν ἡμῖν παρὲν, πολλὰ ἀμυντήριον ἔσται κατὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀντιπάλων στερεόν, πάσης ἐπιβουλῆς ἀποτρόπαιον, ἔπαλξις τῇ σῇ καὶ ἡμετέρᾳ πόλει κρατερὰ, προσπύργιον ἰσχυρόν καὶ τεῖχος ἀντικρὺς ἀδαμάντινον. The Treaty of Nymphaion and this oration are discussed at greater length in Chapter 1.

⁸ The significance of the *pharmakon* for discussions of the gift has informed a wide range of critical thinkers from Friedrich Nietzsche to Jacques Derrida. The double-edged notion of the gift as both a blessing and a curse appears in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The *pharmakon*'s contradictory ambivalence constitutes the opening premise, and even the working method, for Derrida's essay "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago, 1981), 131–2.

⁹ Given this evocative language, Henry Maguire, "Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages," *Speculum*, 72(4) (1997), 1040 [repr. *Image and Imagination in Byzantine Art* (Aldershot, 2007), V], links the portrait described by Holobolos to the wonderworking icon of the Hodegetria.

¹⁰ As will be further discussed in Chapter 3, the penultimate strophe of the Akathistos emphasizes this powerful aspect of the Virgin: χαῖρε, τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὁ ἀσάλευτος πύργος; χαῖρε, δι' ἧς ἐγείρονται τρόπαια, χαῖρε, δι' ἧς ἐχθροὶ καταπίπτουσι.



Figure 0.1 Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, general view of the mosaics on the east wall of the south gallery

specific acts of donation to the church (Figure 0.1). These panels present a double articulation of imperial gift-giving separated by roughly a century: Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042–55) and Zoe with Christ occupy the north side of the wall to the viewer’s left (Figure 0.2), and John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43) and Eirene with the Virgin and Child appear on the south side to the right (Figure 0.3).¹¹ The Macedonian and Komnenian emperors hold sacks of money, their monetary offering for the church, and the empresses carry scrolls with inscriptions, signaling a recording of the donation.¹² The

¹¹ The scholarship on these mosaics is vast, much of it focusing on the changes to the eleventh-century panel, including Nicolas Oikonomides, “The Mosaic Panel of Constantine IX and Zoe in Saint Sophia,” *REB*, 36 (1978), 219–32; and Ioli Kalavrezou, “Irregular Marriages in the 11th Century and the Zoe and Constantine Mosaic in Hagia Sophia” in A. Laiou and D. Simon (eds.), *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth to Twelfth Centuries* (Washington DC, 1994). See also Robin Cormack, “Interpreting the Mosaics of S. Sophia at Istanbul,” *Art History*, 4(2) (1981), 141–6 [repr. *The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage* (1989), VIII]; and Robin Cormack, “The Emperor at St. Sophia: Viewer and Viewed” in J. Durand and A. Guillou (eds.), *Byzance et les images: Cycle de conférences organisé au musée du Louvre par le Service culturel du 5 octobre au 7 décembre 1992* (Paris, 1994), 223–53.

¹² The monetary offering known as the *apokombion* (ἀποκόμβιον) was a heavy purse of coins for imperial distribution on feast days. The name derives from the knot (*kombos*) with which the sack was tied. On *apokombia*, see Alexander Kazhdan, “Apokombion,” *ODB*; and Albert Vogt



Figure 0.2 Constantine IX Monomachos and Zoe with Christ, south gallery mosaics, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, eleventh century



Figure 0.3 John II Komnenos and Eirene with the Virgin and Child, south gallery mosaics, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, twelfth century

emperor's role as benefactor of the church is here made visually explicit, as imperial largesse funded the celebration of the liturgy in the Great Church. The mosaics themselves in turn constitute a gift to the church, one that memorializes such imperial munificence.¹³

The middle Byzantine mosaics of the upper gallery of Hagia Sophia encapsulate the manner in which the imperial office is inscribed through the ritual performance and visual commemoration of gift-giving. A key innovation in imperial imagery in the later Byzantine period testifies to the continued if not closer alignment of the imperial image with largesse. The emperor's effigy was included on acts of donation themselves, chrysobulls, for the first time in the early Palaiologan period.¹⁴ A number of chrysobulls adorned with illuminated portraits survive from the Palaiologan period, three of which are associated with Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328), including one currently in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens granting and extending the privileges of the metropolitan of Monembasia in 1301 (Figure 0.4).¹⁵ Composed of four vellum sheets, which joined together reach

(ed. and trans.), *Le Livre des Cérémonies* (Paris, 1935), vol. I, *Commentary*, 64–6; A. Laiou, *EHB*, 1014; and Michael Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 196, 338–9, 355–6.

- ¹³ For interpretations of the mosaics in terms of imperial largesse, see Natalia Teteriatnikov, "Hagia Sophia: The Two Portraits of the Emperors with Moneybags as a Functional Setting," *Arte Medievale*, n.s. 10(1) (1996), 47–67, who reads the mosaics a reminder to the patriarch and his clergy of the benevolent patronage of the emperor, and by extension of their dependence on his largesse; and Leslie Brubaker, "The Visualization of Gift-Giving in Byzantium and the Mosaics at Hagia Sophia" in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds.), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2010), 33–61.
- ¹⁴ A. Heisenberg, *Aus der Geschichte und der Literatur der Palaiologenzeit* (Munich, 1920), 25–33; Tania Velmans, "Le portrait dans l'art des Paléologues" in *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues*, 104–6; Iohannis Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden, 1976), 184–9; and, more recently, Anthony Cutler, "Legal Iconicity: Documentary Images, the Problem of Genre, and the Work of the Beholder" in Colum Hourihane (ed.), *Byzantine Art: Recent Studies, Essays in Honor of Lois Drewer* (Brepols, 2009), 63–80; and Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Three Illuminated Chrysobulls of Andronikos II?" *Nea Rhome*, 6 (2009), 451–64. On chrysobulls more generally, see Nicolas Oikonomides, "La chancellerie impériale de Byzance du 13e au 15e siècle," *REB*, 43 (1985), 167–95; and Andreas E. Müller, "Imperial Chrysobulls" in Elizabeth Jeffreys with John Haldon and Robin Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), 129–35.
- ¹⁵ M. Evangelatou, H. Papastavrou, and P.-T. Skotti (eds.), *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire* (Athens, 2002), 144–6 (cat. no. 53). In addition to the one in Athens issued for Monembasia in 1301 (now in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens), the other extant chrysobulls of Andronikos II include one issued to the see of Kanina in Albania in 1307 (now in the Morgan Library in New York), and a third that, based on its iconography, was probably also issued for the church of the Helkomenos in Monembasia (it presently serves as a prefatory page pasted in a twelfth-century book in the British Museum, Add. Ms. 37006). See F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches* (Munich, 1925), 34 and 49; P. J. Alexander, "A Chrysobull of the Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus in Favor of the See of Kanina in



Figure 0.4a Chrysobull of Andronikos II Palaiologos, 1301, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (BXM 00534)

nearly 80 inches in length, the chrysobull concludes with the emperor's signature in deep red ink and commences with a miniature of Andronikos offering to Christ a rolled white scroll meant to reference the chrysobull itself. The miniature thus depicts the emperor in the act of donating the very scroll that bears both the representation as well as the textual attestation of the gift itself. The imperial portrait on Palaiologan chrysobulls such as this solidifies the emperor's gift in an almost legal manner, while simultaneously transforming the viewer into a witness to the transaction.¹⁶

Albania," *Byzantion*, 15 (1940–1), 167–207; N. Kavrus-Hoffmann, "Catalogue of Greek Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Collections of the United States of America, Part IV: The Morgan Library and Museum," *Manuscripta* 52(1) (2008), 65–174; and Carr, "Three Illuminated Chrysobulls," 451–64. As Carr points out, the texts of a number of Andronikos's chrysobulls were copied into the vaults of a chapel of the Hodegetria in Mistra. On the phenomenon of transferring documents to walls of Byzantine churches, see Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, "Church Inscriptions as Documents: Chrysobulls – Ecclesiastical Acts – Inventories – Donations – Wills," *ΔΧΑΕ*, 24 (2003), 79–88.

¹⁶ Cutler, "Legal Iconicity," 65ff. Cutler's study takes as its point of departure the chrysobull issued by Alexios III Komnenos of Trebizond for the Dionysiou Monastery on Mount Athos in 1374 that depicts the ruler, along with his wife Theodora Kantakouzene. The Dionysiou example served as the source for an icon of the Emperor with the Prodomos in lieu of his wife. On the Dionysiou chrysobull and icon, see Athanasios A. Karakatsanis (ed.), *Treasures of Mount Athos* (Thessaloniki, 1997). A further illuminated chrysobull was issued by Đurađ Branković for the Esphigmenou monastery on Mount Athos in 1429, which depicts the Serbian despot alongside his wife Irene Kantazouzene and their family.

Innovations such as this highlight the alignment of the imperial image and the gift in later Byzantium. Not surprisingly, there is a rich corpus of visual material that relates to imperial gift exchange in its various permutations. Accordingly, this book treats the later Byzantine imperial image as a gift, and a series of objects that invoke gift-giving constitutes its archive. Not all the objects, however, are gifts per se. Chapter 3, for example, focuses on coinage, traditionally understood as the means of economic exchange in contradistinction to the gift. But in Byzantium, the emperor dispersed coins bearing his effigy in a ritualized performance much closer to giving than buying or selling. Moreover, in my reading of the radical innovations in numismatic iconography following the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople in 1261, coins constitute an image of thanksgiving in and of themselves linked to the lost bronze monumental representation of imperial giving, which is the subject of Chapter 2. The other chapters examine objects created as gifts and extended to such varied sites as Genoa, Paris, and Moscow: one explicitly associated with a diplomatic treaty, another offered at the conclusion of a failed diplomatic mission, and yet another following upon a marriage alliance. Despite variations, all the objects under investigation engage the action of giving, which is inflected with subtle though discernible calibrations of hierarchy. Furthermore, they all represent the emperor in relation to the action of giving. In this way, this book associates the image of the emperor with the matter of gift-giving. As elucidated by a substantial body of anthropological scholarship, gift-giving is neither free nor disinterested, but rather works in complex ways to establish and recalibrate contingent relations of power and hierarchy. For this reason, my attention to the imperial image as a gift provides a crucial optic for re-evaluating the reconfiguration of Byzantine sovereignty at a time of diminished political sway through one of its most important representations: the image of the emperor.

Throughout the Byzantine Empire, the likeness of the emperor and imperial largesse consistently served as a centerpiece for diplomatic strategies. Rich source material from the middle Byzantine period exposes the protocols of Byzantine diplomacy. These primary sources have been culled by scholars to demonstrate the centrality of imperial largesse to the notion of Byzantine identity. Imperial sources adumbrate what kinds of gifts are appropriate for foreign ambassadors, both at court in Constantinople and abroad,

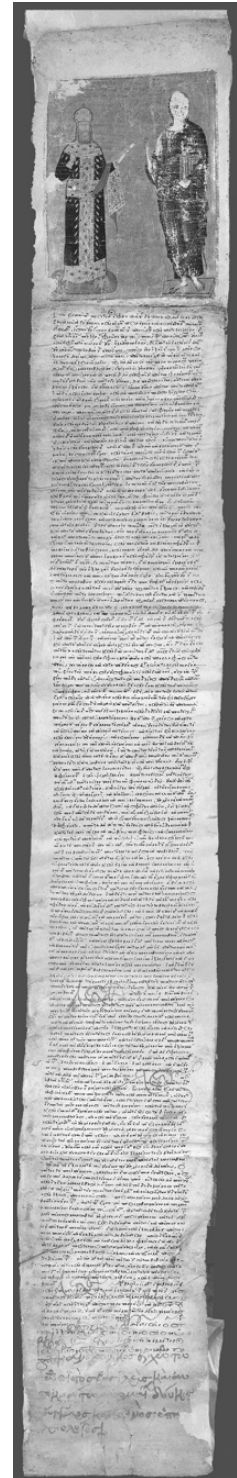


Figure 0.4b

and they emphasize the diplomatic rituals of reciprocity and display as fundamental to negotiations. The emperor, as the embodiment of empire, establishes and reinforces his superiority through extravagant demonstrations of largesse, and he solidifies alliances through such means. It is through the giving of gifts and the resulting enactment of allegiances that the very contours of the empire are drawn. But this model becomes problematic when seen through the lens of the later Byzantine period and its constricted visions of imperium. If hierarchy is implicit in imperial gifts from Constantinople, what happens when the distance between real and represented grandeur becomes so vast? In other words, if to give a gift – and an imperial image as a gift in particular – is to inscribe hierarchy and to position the recipient as indebted, how can a gift from a beleaguered empire in the throes of disintegration convey superiority? What are the precise mechanisms by which giving can still convey the greatness of its giver? These questions prompt a critical rethinking of our understanding of the period, not only of the role of Byzantium within other cultural formations but also of the relation of the visual arts to empire, ascendancy, and decline.

Another development of the Palaiologan period underscores the power of the emperor's portrait to proclaim his suzerainty: the imperial image became codified as official insignia in court dress in the later Byzantine period.¹⁷ Pseudo-Kodinos explicitly describes a headdress that bears an imperial portrait as a *skaranikon*,¹⁸ representations of which are attested in most media, both portable and monumental.¹⁹ Among the most notable examples is the fourteenth-century typikon for the convent of the Mother

¹⁷ Earlier art objects such as two ivory plaques depicting Empress Ariadne wearing a *tablion* decorated with an imperial bust. See W. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz am Rhein, 1976), 49–50; and K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York, 1979), 31–2. But images such as these are rare, and only in the Palaiologan period does the imperial image become codified as an integral – and official – component of court dress. See notes 18–22 below.

¹⁸ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, edited by Jean Verpeaux (Paris, 1966), 152–3. See Maria Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries)* (Leiden, 2003), 70 and 358; and Maria Parani, “Cultural Identity and Dress: The Case of Late Byzantine Ceremonial Costume,” *JÖB*, 57 (2007), 95–134.

¹⁹ In manuscript, the most notable example is in the Lincoln College Typikon, on which see below. It is also worn by the Grand Duke Apokaukos in his copy of the works of Hippocrates (Paris BN 2144), on which see *BFP*, 26–7 (cat. no. 2). The *skaranikon* also appears on icons. Grand Primercerion John wears such a headdress on the fourteenth-century icon of Christ Pantokrator in the Hermitage (on which see Alice Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums* (New York, 1978), 281–4) and Constantine Akropolites appears in such a headdress in the lower left corner of the silver frame of Virgin Hodegetria icon in the Tret'iakov Gallery, on which see Bank, *Byzantine Art*, 252–4; and *BFP*, 28–30 (cat. no. 4). On the ideological valences of court dress during the later Byzantine period more generally, which includes a discussion of the *skaranikon*, see the compelling article by Parani, “Cultural Identity and Dress,” 95–134.

of God of Certain Hope in Constantinople, known as the Lincoln College Typikon, which includes a series of portraits of family members such as Theodore Synadenos wearing precisely this tall headdress adorned with the effigy of the emperor (Figure 0.5).²⁰ It is also depicted on a group of anonymous courtiers in the fresco cycle of the Akathistos Hymn on the eastern wall of the narthex of the Katholikon of the Holy Trinity in Cozia, Valachia (Figure 0.6).²¹ Here a group of dignitaries wearing *skaranika*, which bear a bust-length outline of the emperor, stand behind the emperor himself, who gestures in reverence toward the icon of the Virgin at the center of the composition, which is mounted above an embroidered *podea* echoing an image of the emperor in prayer. Such an image, which takes as its inspiration the twenty-third strophe of the Akathistos, brings together two of Byzantium's most potent images – that of the Virgin and of the emperor – and showcases each of them as worthy of veneration and emulation.

The *skaranikon* served to visualize imperial and courtly authority in clearly legible sartorial terms: it glorified the imperial office by picturing the effigy of the emperor as the source, even the defining feature, of the elevated status of its wearer.²² The imperial image was conceptualized as a privilege to be worn as a symbol of allegiance, precedence, and rank. Only a privileged few were given the honor of wearing the emperor's likeness. Although the emperor's image as a codified sartorial component of the imperial court hierarchy originates in the Palaiologan period, the imperial image was deployed diplomatically much earlier. The emperor's likeness proclaimed his suzerainty both within the empire and within the realm of foreign diplomacy.²³ To offer an imperial image as a gift is to inscribe

²⁰ Bodleian Library, MS. Lincoln College Gr. 35 dating to 1327–42 includes depictions of the *skaranikon* on the following portraits: John Synadenos on folio 2r, John Synadenos on folio 3r, Manuel Asen on 5r, Constantine Raul on folio 6r, and Theodore Synadenos on folio 8r. On this manuscript, see Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 190–206; Anthony Cutler and Paul Magdalino, “Some Precisions on the Lincoln College Typikon,” *CA*, 27 (1978), 179–98; and Irmgard Hutter, “Die Geschichte des Lincoln College Typikons,” *JÖB*, 45 (1995), 79–114. On the text of the typikon, see *BMFD*, 1512–78.

²¹ On this image and its context, see Gordana Babić, “L'iconographie constantinopolitaine de l'Acatiste de la Vierge à Cozia (Valachie),” *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta (Recueil des Travaux de l'Institut d'Études Byzantine)*, 14–15 (1973), 173–89; and more recently (and with color images), Iohannis Spatharakis, *The Pictorial Cycles of the Akathistos Hymn for the Virgin* (Leiden, 2005), 68–73.

²² In Parani's words (“Cultural Identity and Dress,” 108): “The presence of the imperial portrait indicated not only the source of the authority of the officials but also highlighted their proximity to the emperor.”

²³ In the early Byzantine period, the conversion of the Lazi to Christianity, for example, included the bestowal of a tunic embroidered with an image of the emperor. See Roger Scott, “Diplomacy in the Sixth Century: The Evidence of John Malalas” in Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium*



Figure 0.5 Portrait of Theodore Komnenos Doukas Synadenos and Wife, Lincoln College Typikon, Bodleian Library, MS. Lincoln College gr. 35, fol. 8r, c. 1327–42

of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990 (Aldershot, 1992), 159–65. Moreover, in the eleventh century, an enamel crown with the emperor's image was sent to Hungary. See Cecily J. Hilsdale, "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-Invented," *ArtH*, 31(5) (2008), 602–31.



Figure 0.6 Detail of the fresco cycle of the Akathistos Hymn from the Katholikon of the Holy Trinity in Cozia, Valachia

Byzantine hierarchy. It is to prescribe allegiance through an act of seeming generosity, and the logic of this contradiction relates to the hierarchical stakes of gift-giving more broadly.

Historicizing imperial giving

A contradiction lies at the heart of the term “gift.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* emphatically stresses the free and disinterested nature of a gift, but it is here understood as deeply imbued with agendas of hierarchy and reciprocity.²⁴ A gift, in general usage and by definition, is something freely given; it is predicated on a lack of self-interest. Whether property, a thing, an experience, or even personhood itself, a gift is offered in exchange for

²⁴ Portions of the following discussion are drawn from Cecily J. Hilsdale, “Gift,” *Studies in Iconography*, 33 (2012), 171–82, a special issue of the journal, edited by Nina Rowe dedicated to *Medieval Art History Today – Critical Terms*, which assesses the utility of the term “gift” and “prestation” as a critical term for medieval art history.

nothing. Yet anthropologist Marcel Mauss in his *Essai sur le don* famously declared that there could be no free gift and that giving always involves self-interest to a certain degree.²⁵ From a philological-linguistic perspective, Émile Benveniste has traced the ambivalent etymology of the gift in Indo-European language, demonstrating that the languages of giving and taking are intimately related.²⁶ Later Jacques Derrida called the free gift further into question, claiming that there could be no gift at all, let alone a free one: to give always already negates the giving.²⁷

At its core, Mauss's study of the gift represents a commitment to the principle of reciprocity. Cyclical rather than terminal, gifts, for Mauss, instill three obligations: to give, to receive, and to return. Anthropologists and social scientists have taken issue with the spiritual logic of this reciprocal model and in particular with the mechanism compelling reciprocation or the spirit of the thing given. For others, Mauss's work serves as a springboard for related aspects of prestation²⁸ such as debt, expenditure, and largesse. Maurice Godelier, for example, revisits Mauss in order to consider sacred objects that do not circulate, proposing that the logic of such gifts concerns the ungiveable, a proposal similar in many ways to Annette Weiner's examination of inalienable possessions, which were meant to be guarded

²⁵ Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison d'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année sociologique*, n.s. 1 (1923–4), 30–186, reprinted with an introduction by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris, 1950), 145–279, translated by W. D. Halls with foreword by Mary Douglas as *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York, 1990, repr. 2000). Since the *Essai sur le don* first appeared, generations of scholars have re-evaluated Mauss's method, his conclusions, and his larger ideological agenda. No longer limited to the social sciences, ideologies of prestation have been invoked by medievalists within the contexts of literature, philology, immunities, simony, liturgy, inheritance, and more. Three relatively recent collections of essays stand out: Esther Cohen and Mayke B. de Jong (eds.), *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context* (Leiden, 2001); Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen (eds.), *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen, 2003); and Davies and Fouracre (eds.), *The Languages of Gift*. Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift-Giving," *Speculum*, 81 (2006), 671–99, also represents an important contribution to the debate.

²⁶ Émile Benveniste, "Gift and Exchange in the Indo-European Vocabulary" in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Miami, 1971), also excerpted in Alan D. Schrift (ed.), *The Logic of the Gift: Towards an Ethic of Generosity* (New York, 1997), 33–42. Schrift's volume gathers together a number of important interventions on the gift, including two seminal pieces by Pierre Bourdieu, one of which was written expressly for the volume.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I, Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, 1992). As a representative of new phenomenology in France, see Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, 2002).

²⁸ Drawing on Mauss's understanding of the gift as part of a system of "prestation totale," the term "prestation" is used in this study to "emphasize the critical role of the gift in the creation and maintenance of social structures of reciprocity and bonds of debt and obligation." See Hilsdale, "Gift," 172.

rather than extended as gifts.²⁹ Complicating Mauss's neat cyclicity, Pierre Bourdieu characterizes the gift as a profound articulation of risk by highlighting the associated elements of contingency and implied danger that result from the fundamental uncertainty of whether, what, or when a return or counter-gift will appear.³⁰ He thus reads giving as merely an incomplete gesture, emphasizing that the cyclical nature of the exchange – the paths, logic, and effects of gifts – can only be appreciated fully in retrospect.

Much of our understanding of medieval conceptions of gift exchange is due to the survival of the *Book of Gifts and Rarities* (*Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf*), an Arabic compilation of ceremonial court exchanges.³¹ The language of reciprocity is explicit in Arabic, which exhibits a finely tuned semantic range for expressing gifting. Two different words for “gift” are specified: one signifies a contract with no expectation of return and is used commonly for diplomatic gifts, while a second implies the obligation of a return gift from the recipient. The distinction, in other words, is between conditional and unconditional gifts.³² An often-cited anecdote from this medieval compilation explicates the competitive nature of gift-gifting cross-culturally. The text reports the response to a gift sent by a Byzantine emperor to Caliph al-Ma'mun with the following instructions: “Send him a gift a hundred times greater than his, so that he realizes the glory of Islam and the grace that Allah bestowed on us through it.”³³ This passage confirms

²⁹ Maurice Godelier, *L'énigme du don* (Paris, 1996); and Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley, 1992).

³⁰ Bourdieu builds on *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge, 1990) in “Marginalia – Some Additional Notes on the Gift” in Schrieff (ed.), *The Logic of the Gift*, 231–2. Bourdieu's reading of the gift will be further elaborated upon in the Conclusion. One of the more significant recent contributions to the scholarship on gifts concerns the temporal dimension of giving. In response to the gift-versus-commodity debate, on which see Chris Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London, 1982), Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff have argued for a more fluid model whereby objects can pass in and out of phases of commoditization and gifting. See Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value” in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1996 [1986]), 3–59; and in the same volume Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” 63–90.

³¹ Ghada al-Hijawi al-Qaddumi (ed. and trans.), *Book of Gifts and Rarities (Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf): Selections Compiled in the Fifteenth Century from an Eleventh-Century Manuscript on Gifts and Treasures* (Cambridge, MA, 1996). See Anthony Cutler, “Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies,” *DOP*, 55 (2001), 247–78; and Anthony Cutler, “Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38(1) (2008), 79–101.

³² See al-Qaddumi (ed. and trans.), *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, introduction; as well as Ann Christys, “The Queen of the Franks Offers Gifts to the Caliph al-Mutafi” in Davies and Fouracre (eds.), *The Languages of Gift*, 149–70.

³³ Al-Qaddumi (ed. and trans.), *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 77. See, however, the cautionary remarks about agonistic giving by Cutler in “Significant Gifts.”

the basic premise advanced by anthropologists that giving is fundamentally agonistic and that it triggers shifts in power and difference. Hierarchy, this passage suggests, is articulated through the transfer of sumptuous presents.

Anthony Cutler has elucidated the dynamics of prestation in the context of this text alongside contemporary Byzantine sources in relation to anthropological theories. Evaluation or assessment, for example, is one point of similarity between the Arabic *Book of Gifts and Rarities* and the roughly contemporaneous Greek compilation of court ceremonial known as the *Book of Ceremonies*.³⁴ In the account of the imperial reception of Olga of Kiev in Constantinople, the Byzantine source emphasizes gift assessment: the text relates how the gift is brought first “to the *magistros* so that he knows what each gift [is worth], so that he will be able to recall to the emperor at the time of the exchange of gifts what he should return through his ambassadors.”³⁵ Diplomatic gifting at the highest level of the imperial administration, this episode suggests, involved careful calculation. Although this Greek text lacks the explicitly agonistic aspect of prestation found in the *Kitab al-Hadaya*, it makes it abundantly clear that gift exchange was strategic and that giving ultimately concerned getting.

The strategic necessity of thinking about gifts in the diplomatic context is elucidated by a tenth-century Byzantine packing list that specifies luxury items to be brought on military expeditions for distribution to foreigners.³⁶ According to the specifications of this prescriptive list, the imperial

³⁴ Michael McCormick, “Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies,” *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Gesellschaft für Byzantinistik*, 35 (1985), 1–20; Averil Cameron, “The Construction of Court Ceremonial: The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies” in D. Cannadine and S. Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36. As Dagron puts it in *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003), 54, the *Book of Ceremonies* synthesizes “various protocols and, according to the rules of the genre, removing the proper names and dates in order to transform a historical document into a model.”

³⁵ Reiske, *De ceremoniis*, I:89, 407, 7–13 as in Cutler, “Gifts and Gift Exchange,” 257–8, who notes that this particular passage is taken from Peter the Patrician. Matthew Canepa also discusses this passage in *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, 2009), 30–1. Michael Featherstone, “Olga’s Visit to Constantinople in *De Cerimoniis*,” *REB*, 61 (2003), 241–51, productively reassesses the ceremonial terms of Olga’s reception.

³⁶ John F. Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions* (Vienna, 1990), 108–11. On diplomatic gifts more broadly, see Telemachos Lounghis, *Les ambassades byzantines en Occident: depuis la fondation des états barbares jusqu’aux Croisades (407–1096)* (Athens, 1980); Peter Schreiner, “Diplomatische Geschenke zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen ca. 800–1200: eine Analyse der Texte mit Quellenanhang,” *DOP*, 58 (2004), 251–82; Leslie Brubaker, “The Elephant and the Ark: Cultural and Material Interchange Across the Mediterranean in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries,” *DOP*, 58 (2004), 175–95; Marlia Mango, “Hierarchies of Rank and Materials: Diplomatic Gifts Sent by Romanus I in 935 and 938,” *ΔΧΑΕ*, 24 (2003) 365–74; and Franz Alto Bauer, “Byzantinische Geschenkdiplo-matie” in

vestiariion's load should include the imperial regalia, clothing, and items of imperial ceremonial (vessels, swords, perfumes, textiles, etc.), books (liturgical, strategic and prognostic manuals, and histories), and miscellaneous medical substances.³⁷ In addition to these items, according to the text, both textiles and specie were to be included for distribution. Tailored and untailored cloths of varying degrees of quality and with an abundance of decorative features from stripes to eagles, imperial symbol, and hornets, all with precisely specified monetary values, were to be brought along to be dispatched to distinguished powerful foreigners.³⁸ But the question of how such largesse should be distributed apparently required judiciousness. An anonymous sixth-century Byzantine treatise on strategy speaks of the importance of training envoys in the arena of diplomatic gift exchange. An ambassador sent on a mission bearing gifts must judge whether to extend all the gifts brought along, to retain the most valuable, or to hold back the gifts and official letters altogether and deliver only expressions of friendship.³⁹ The text suggests that the middle ground – offering some of the gifts but not all of them – is the best option when dealing with a potential aggressor as it reduces hostility without enriching the enemy.⁴⁰

A critical methodological point emerges from these sources. Generally gifts were extended strategically as part of negotiations for or celebrations of peace, a peace that often did not last the lifetime of the gift itself. To read gifts as evidence for friendly relations is therefore to miss the active role they played in establishing those very relations by their exchange; it is to miss their agency in the political sphere. A recognition of the strategically

Falko Daim and Jörg Drauschke (eds.), *Byzanz, das Römerreich im Mittelalter. Teil 3: Peripherie und Nachbarschaft* (Mainz, 2010), 1–54.

³⁷ See also Michael Hendy's discussion of "the imperial baggage-train" in *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 272–5.

³⁸ Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, 108–11, 126–7: "διὰ τὸ εἰς εὐγενεῖς καὶ μεγάλους ἔθνικοὺς ἀποστέλλεσθαι."

³⁹ George Dennis (ed. and trans.), *Three Byzantine Military Treatises: Text, Translation, and Notes* (Washington DC, 1985), 126: 30–42.

⁴⁰ In addition to offering gifts in the diplomatic field, the *taktika* of Leo VI warns of the dangers of accepting gifts, at least out of rank. It reminds officers in no uncertain terms not to accept gifts from soldiers under their charge ("Without exception, you must not accept any kind of gift from any man under your command, whether of high or low rank"). George Dennis (ed. and trans.), *The Taktika of Leo VI: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Washington DC, 2010), 510: 121–3. The text also warns about the danger of bribery, which can lead to the downfall of an army (566: 427–31). According to the text, not only will bribe-taking leave soldiers resourceless and greedy, it will also result in the promotion of cowardly men and will ultimately prevent the army from facing the enemy courageously. There is therefore an ethics to proper giving and receiving. On bribes and gifts, see also Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 268–71.

significant motivation of giving prompts us to see an element of desire in gifts. If giving is strategic, as contemporary sources make clear, gifts possess a measure of the optative, the linguistic register or grammatical mood of wish or desire. Objects extended as gifts, it is here suggested, cannot be read as evidence for social relations in a straightforward manner. A gift rarely illustrates political allegiance, but rather is often exchanged in an attempt to establish such allegiance. A liturgical vestment sent from Constantinople to Moscow in the early fifteenth century, for example, visually celebrates the intertwined sacro-imperial authority of the Byzantine capital (Figures 5.2–5.5). But my reading of the complicated program of this sumptuous vestment in Chapter 5 situates the motivation of its commission precisely in the loosening of imperial ties with Moscow. Likewise, as argued in Chapter 4, the deluxe manuscript sent to Paris at roughly the same time is motivated by failure rather than success (Figures 4.3–4.4). Its commissioning follows on the heels of the emperor's protracted, and ultimately failed, mission to Western Europe in an attempt to secure aid for Constantinople. These gifts, in other words, were extended in the hope of strengthening ties and building support. Their entire organization was fundamentally strategic and contrived to underscore the Byzantine desire for future allegiance.

There are further methodological implications for invoking analytic tools derived from the field of anthropology within the discipline of art history. In theorizing material gifts, anthropologists and social scientists have for the most part focused on tangible goods of a somewhat generic character, such as foodstuffs or kula shells. The formal particularities of individual objects generally lie outside their analysis and thus the contexts of exchange are privileged over the objects of exchange. On this point, art historians are positioned to offer a significant intervention. The tools of analysis particular to the discipline – stylistic, technical, iconographical, and other – allow for a thorough investigation of the specific material and formal properties of medieval gifts and prestation. It is one thing for textual scholars to recognize the power and hierarchy inherent in gift exchange, and quite another for art historians to elaborate precisely how such agendas are visually constructed by relying on texts, objects, images, and spatial environments.

Nonetheless, anthropologists have taught us to recognize the importance of the ritual context in which gifts are exchanged as well as the social relations triggered by their exchange. An account of the visual dimensions of prestation therefore entails an examination of how the dynamics of obligation and reciprocity are visually encoded not only in objects and images but also in the spaces of their ceremonial performance, display, or concealment. Robin Cormack, for example, has considered the imperial

palace of Constantinople as the ritual setting for the enactment of authority through gift-giving.⁴¹ In addition to environments of gift exchange, gifts themselves have been the subject of recent study, as scholars have begun to consider classes of gifts and patterns of exchange, as well as individual art objects created as gifts, with attention being paid both to their initial offering and to their reception and transformation over time.⁴² Moreover, recent scholarship has attended to the mobilization of gifts in the political, dynastic, and sacred spheres throughout the medieval world. As such scholarship makes clear, medieval gifts arbitrate diplomatic cross-cultural encounter, they mediate familial and dynastic relations, and they triangulate sacred transactions as votive offerings.⁴³ In these diverse contexts, gifts negotiate rivalries and also serve as agents of union.

⁴¹ Robin Cormack, "But is it Art?" in Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 219–36. See also Franz Alto Bauer, "Potentieller Besitz: Geschenke im Rahmen des byzantinischen Hofzeremoniells" in Franz Alto Bauer (ed.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen—Gestalt und Zeremoniell* (Istanbul, 2006), 135–69. For a reading of the ritual and spatial context of gift exchange in the Valois context, see Brigitte Buettner,

"Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400," *ArtB*, 83(4) (2001), 598–625.

⁴² Classes of objects extended as gifts have been treated most thoroughly by Anthony Cutler in "Gifts and Gift Exchange," and "Significant Gifts." Two recent studies of particular Byzantine gifts, with attention to their later reconfiguration in the West, include Warren Woodfin, "Presents Given and Presence Subverted: The Cunegunda *Chormantel* in Bamberg and the Ideology of Byzantine Textiles," *Gesta*, 47(1) (2008), 33–49; and Hilsdale, "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift," 602–31.

⁴³ On the diplomatic gifts in particular, see note 36 above. Two studies of individual gifts mediating familial tensions include Francisco Prado-Vilar, "Circular Visions of Fertility and Punishment: Caliphal Ivory Caskets from al-Andalus," *Muqarnas*, 14 (1997), 19–41; and Cecily J. Hilsdale, "Constructing a Byzantine *Augusta*: A Greek Book for a French Bride," *ArtB*, 87(3) (2005): 458–83. In terms of sacred transaction, Hugo van der Velden's important study, *The Donor's Image: Gérard Loyet and the Votive Portraits of Charles the Bold*, trans. Beverley Jackson (Brepols, 2000), examines reciprocal complexes and votive portraits, with particular attention to consumable materials and sacred transactions. See also Christopher Wood, "The Votive Scenario," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 59/60 (2011), 207–21. Within the Byzantine context, Nancy Ševčenko and Annemarie Weyl Carr have examined most fully the self-referentiality of votive images with donor portraits: Nancy Ševčenko, "The Representation of Donors and Holy Figures on Four Byzantine Icons," *ΔΧΑΕ*, 17 (1993–4), 157–64; Nancy P. Ševčenko, "Close Encounters: Contact between Holy Figures and the Faithful as Represented in Byzantine Works of Art" in Durand and Guillou (eds.), *Byzance et les images*, 255–85; and Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art," *Gesta*, 45(2) (2006), 189–98. See also more recently Tania Kambourova, "Ktitor: le sens du don des panneaux votifs dans le monde byzantin," *Byzantion*, 78 (2008), 261–87; Tania Kambourova, "Pouvoir et prière dans les images byzantines de don," *RESEE*, 46 (2008), 135–50. Titos Papamastorakis, "The Display of Accumulated Wealth in Luxury Icons: Gift-Giving from the Byzantine Aristocracy to God in the Twelfth Century" in Maria Vassilaki (ed.), *Βυζαντινές Εικόνες: Τέχνη, τεχνική και τεχνολογία* (Voutes Heraklion, 2002), 35–47, has read first-person petitions inscribed by donors on icons in light of the anthropology of gift-giving. See also Franz Alto Bauer, "Herrschergaben an St. Peter," *Mitteilungen zur Spätantiken Archäologie und Byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte*, 4 (2005), 65–99; and Franz Alto

The conceptual framework of the gift as first elaborated in the field of anthropology thus opens up broad avenues of art historical study. While a single unified theory cannot adequately capture the complexity of individual objects and visualizations, understanding gift exchange as a powerful mediating agent in social and sacred dynamics is central to its productivity. As inherently relational, the gift operates on an optative register as an active agent of social bond and fracture, and it obliges and orchestrates power relations among individuals and sacred economies. A recognition of the entangled agendas implicit in the diverse visual cultures of prestation allows us to see the objects of analysis not as mere passive reflections of social and sacred relations but as integral to the production of those relations.

The gift and hindsight

With its focus on the circulation of the imperial image and the gift in the increasingly cosmopolitan later Byzantine diplomatic arena, this book sits at the convergence of a number of key areas of research. Historians have provided comprehensive analyses of foreign diplomatic protocol, practice, and objects.⁴⁴ The later Byzantine period, however, often figures as a mere adjunct, or even an unfortunate coda, to the more prominent earlier period.⁴⁵ This surely relates to the discrepancy between the political reality of the later period and its self-representation, which is described by Nicolas Oikonomides as a “constant opposition between a glorified past on the one hand and the cold facts of the time on the other.”⁴⁶ In light of this opposition,

Bauer, *Gabe und Person: Geschenke als Träger personaler Aura in der Spätantike* (Eichstätt, 2009). See also note 100 in Chapter 1.

⁴⁴ The papers on Byzantine diplomacy edited by Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin represent an especially important point of entry to this field. More recently, see S. Lamakis, Maria Leontsini, T. Lounghis, and Vasiliki Vlysidou (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy: A Seminar* (Athens, 2007), which includes a chapter on the diplomatic efforts of Michael VIII. I thank Telemachos Lounghis for sharing this study with me.

⁴⁵ Nicolas Oikonomides opens his essay “Byzantine Diplomacy, A.D. 1204–1453: Means and Ends” in Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 73, by noting the meager treatment of the period in Louis Bréhier, *Les institutions de l’empire byzantin* (Paris, 1949) and Dimitri Obolensky, “The Principles and Methods of Byzantine Diplomacy” in *Byzantium and the Slavs* (London, 1994). Note also that of the studies of diplomatic activity mentioned above, Franz Alto Bauer’s “Byzantinische Geschenkdiplo-matie,” is exceptional in that it does not end before the Fourth Crusade, unlike Lounghis, *Les ambassades byzantines* and Schreiner, “Diplomatische Geschenke.” There are a number of dedicated studies of diplomatic activities of the later Byzantine period, especially focusing on individual figures such as Demetrios Kydones or Manuel Chrysoloras, which will be addressed in Chapter 5 (where more specific studies of the diplomacy in this period will be cited).

⁴⁶ Oikonomides, in Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 74.

it is difficult to avoid evaluative judgments, according to which diplomatic strategies of the period are inevitably deemed unsuccessful.⁴⁷ The means and ends of later Byzantine diplomacy are fundamentally in conflict. At least since Edward Gibbon, decline is inevitably associated with fall.⁴⁸ With hindsight, modern scholars who know that the end of the empire was near cannot help but negatively evaluate late Byzantine diplomatic strategies. But this book attempts to suspend such judgment. The perception of decline, testified by intellectuals such as Gregoras with his lament about the pauper “atoms of Epicurus” in the imperial coffers of his day, does not necessarily signal defeat. For those historical actors living through the turbulent later Byzantine period, the perception of decline did not inevitably and teleologically result in the empire’s fall.

The suspension of evaluative judgment stems from the need to see continuity and change in non-teleological terms. Certain aspects of the glorified past, including imperial imagery, were maintained in the face of decline in the Palaiologan period. But despite the conservatism of imperial imagery in general,⁴⁹ in the final centuries of Byzantium we encounter subtle though

⁴⁷ Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*.

⁴⁸ In terms of the place of the late Byzantine period in the modern historiography of the Byzantine Empire, it is noteworthy that one of our principal primary sources for the period, Doukas’s *Historia Turko-Byzantina*, is published in English as *The Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks* (Detroit, 1975). On the place of Gibbon in the literature on decline, see Peter Burke’s “Tradition and Experience: The Idea of Decline from Bruni to Gibbon,” and Steven Runciman, “Gibbon and Byzantium,” both in G. W. Bowersock, John Clive, Stephen R. Graubard (eds.), *Edward Gibbon and the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 1977). With much of the foundational Byzantine historical scholarship concerned with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, Byzantium is read generally as a fundamentally doomed state. For a succinct overview of these vast issues, including a contextualization of Gibbon within the context of British imperialism, see F. K. Haarer, “Writing Histories of Byzantium: The Historiography of Byzantine History” in Liz James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (New York, 2010), 9–21. It could be argued that the conflation of decline and fall as one teleology represents a fundamentally early modern or modern construct decidedly at odds with the Byzantine understanding of the progress and stasis of temporal power. The dissertation by the late Angela Volan provided an important analysis of the Byzantine understanding of the teleological course of history and apocalyptic prophecies. See Angela Volan, *Last Judgments and Last Emperors: Illustrating Apocalyptic History in Late- and Post-Byzantine Art* (Chicago, 2005).

⁴⁹ André Grabar’s *L’empereur dans l’art byzantin* (Paris, 1936 [1971]) remains the principal study of imperial imagery, which he treats as inherently conservative in nature. Earlier monographs include Jean Ebersolt, *Les arts somptuaires de Byzance; Étude sur l’art impérial de Constantinople* (Paris, 1923); and Spyridon Lampros, *Λεύκωμα Βυζαντινῶν αὐτοκρατόρων* (Athens, 1930). Among the more recent studies of imperial imagery, see Robert S. Nelson and Paul Magdalino, “The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century,” *ByzF*, 8 (1982), 123–83 [repr. Paul Magdalino, *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1991), IV]; Henry Maguire, “Images of the Court” in Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261* (New York, 1997), 183–91; Henry Maguire, “The Heavenly Court” in Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine*

discernible innovations. Indeed, as discussed above, the addition of the emperor's portrait to chrysobulls during this later Byzantine period represents one such innovation, as does the introduction of the emperor's effigy to official court dress, where the *skaranikon* designates imperial allegiance in clear visual terms – and again, representations of court officials and dignitaries wearing *skaranika* survive in an impressive array of media from the Palaiologan period. As the following chapters make clear, even when largesse was compromised by an economic scarcity that rendered the generous imperial ideal highly problematic, the imperial image was extended as a gift in the most urgent diplomatic contexts. This book thus insists that decline itself is not simply negative, but also contains a recuperative, even generative, dimension. It asks, in other words, what decline enables. What new patterns of artistic practice, patronage, and munificence emerge in the face of decline?

Organization

The trajectory of *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline* is governed by the physical heart of the empire, Constantinople. The first part of the book centers on Constantinople's reconquest from the Latins in the thirteenth century; the city's eight-year-long Ottoman siege following the devastating civil wars in the fourteenth century motivates the second half. The beginning of the Palaiologan period and its near end, in other words, provide the frame for the book.⁵⁰ Under the rubric “*Adventus*: the emperor and the city,” the three chapters that comprise Part I engage the 1261 Byzantine restoration of Constantinople. Collectively they investigate the visual negotiation of legitimacy and sovereignty in the opening years

Court Culture from 829 to 1204 (Washington DC, 1997), 247–58 [repr. Henry Maguire, *Image and Imagination in Byzantine Art* (Aldershot, 2007), XI]; and Alicia Walker, *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries CE* (Cambridge, 2012). Complementing these studies of imperial imagery are the following studies of the imperial office, imperial ritual, and political theory: Otto Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell: Vom oströmischen Staats- und Reichsgedanken* (Darmstadt, 1956); Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*; Hélène Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 1975); and Dimitar Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁵⁰ To be clear, the book is divided into two parts by the civil wars of the fourteenth century. The first part of the book centers primarily on the reigns of the first Palaiologoi, Michael VIII, and his son Andronikos II, whose abdication in 1328 ended the First Civil War (1321–8). Resuming after the Second Civil War (1341–7), the second part is set primarily during the reigns of Manuel II and his son John VIII.

of the later Byzantine Empire through three key images of Michael VIII, the first Palaiologan emperor, that engage in differing manners the Byzantine restoration of the imperial city, which was conceptualized as a divine gift.

The opening chapter, set in the years immediately preceding the reconquest of Constantinople, provides a sustained analysis of a silk textile, or *peplos*, sent to Genoa as part of the 1261 Treaty of Nymphaion, the treaty through which Michael, then emperor in exile in Nicaea, formalized an alliance with the Commune of Genoa in an attempt to reconquer Latin-occupied Constantinople. At the center of the silk, the emperor is depicted being led into the church of Genoa framed by a detailed hagiographic cycle of St Lawrence, the patron saint of the Genoese church for which the silk was destined (Figure 1.1). Through the imbrication of imperial image, hagiographic narrative, and political pact, this diplomatic gift is read in Chapter 1 as a visual encomium to the emperor and to imperial transaction on the eve of the defining event of the later Byzantine period and the event for which the *peplos* was custom-created: the return of Byzantine rule to the imperial city.

After 1261, the emperor celebrated the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople through a new visual vocabulary of thanksgiving, as evidenced by a monumental bronze statue erected in the restored city and a related imperial design serially struck and circulated on gold coins, the subjects of Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. Read as the emanation of a fundamentally fraught reign, the bronze monument depicted the emperor offering a model of the imperial city to the *archestrategos* and was erected in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles as part of the emperor's agenda of association with Constantine the Great. Analysis of this no longer extant monument elucidates the problem of legitimacy, one of the key contested issues facing the early Palaiologoi. Beyond forging visual and thematic connections with other imperial monuments from the past throughout the recently restored city, this chapter proposes that the lost monument commemorates imperial genealogy while simultaneously participating in the inauguration of a new iconography of the prostrate emperor, one that signals a profound shift in imperial ideology.

Imperial gold coinage, in all likelihood, provided the most immediate pictorial source for the lost bronze monument. Like the bronze monument, gold coins struck after the imperial restoration of Constantinople depicted the emperor on his knees in a visual dialogue that similarly engaged issues of thanksgiving and legitimacy. The reverse of Michael VIII's gold *hyperpyron* represents the emperor on knee being presented by his angelic advocate to

Christ, and the obverse presents an image of the orant Virgin surrounded by the walls of Constantinople (Figures 3.2–3.4). Chapter 3 reads this unprecedented iconography according to the transactional logic of displaced giving and imperial instrumentality, a concept emphasized in rhetorical sources of the period. Coinage, the very medium of economic exchange that crossed geographical and political boundaries, disseminated this specific vision of imperium to a wide context and is thus ideally suited to trace the circulation of the new image of the emperor for the much-changed later Byzantine Empire. This chapter advances the claims of the previous chapter in its discussion of the innovative visual rhetoric inaugurated by the imperial capital's reconquest, but it also constitutes the transition to Part II, in that it traces the numismatic reconfigurations prompted by the instability of Palaiologan succession, and the rupture of the fourteenth-century civil wars when Byzantine gold ceased to be struck altogether.

In examining the art and politics of the restored Byzantine capital, Part I argues for the instantiation of a new and distinctly Palaiologan imperial image. It further assesses the nature of the empire's restoration. What previous models of rule were evoked and at what cost was the restoration effected? The large silk *peplos* sent to the Italian maritime city, as well as the monumental bronze effigy of imperial gift-giving and the serially struck gold coins, usher in a period where largesse would be compromised by an economic scarcity that rendered the generous imperial ideal more problematic. Within the new economic constraints of this age, what patterns of artistic practice, patronage, and largesse emerged?

Part II of the book provides some provisional answers to these questions. Under the rubric of the “Atoms of Epicurus’: the imperial image as gift in an age of decline,” Chapters 4 and 5 turn to diplomatic gift-giving strategies in the early fifteenth century. These chapters argue for the cultivation of two distinct later Byzantine imperial identities: that of the emperor as custodian of a long and venerable philosophical tradition and also as the guardian of Orthodox spirituality. In the restored but politically and economically unstable diplomatic arena of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, new diplomatic gift-giving strategies needed to be developed. Byzantine textiles, icons, and relics were still extended as gifts as they had been in earlier times, though often recycled and re-gifted, but their status across the Mediterranean was significantly diminished as the silk trade had been demonopolized, trade routes relinquished, and sacred relics looted by Latin crusaders.

New sources of value for exchange with the courts of Western Europe were required, and Greek learning was cultivated in order to meet this

diplomatic need. Chapter 4 takes as its focus an illuminated manuscript of the Neoplatonic writings of Pseudo Dionysios the Areopagite that was sent to Paris in 1408 after Manuel II's extended diplomatic mission to the West (Figures 4.3–4.4). By tracing the elaborate genealogy of past gifts to which it relates, this chapter sees this book as part of a conscious fostering of Greek studies on the part of the Byzantine imperial administration. The Renaissance fascination with Hellenism emerges here as an informed Byzantine diplomatic strategy: the imperial court recognized western desires for Greek texts and, taking advantage of that interest, fostered Hellenic studies through gifts of manuscripts and teachers.

A vastly different visual rhetoric was employed within the larger Orthodox *oikoumene*. One consequence of the tenuous socio-political climate of the era was that Orthodoxy itself became the subject of diplomatic negotiation. In the beginning of the Palaiologan period, Michael VIII attempted to subject the Byzantine Church to Rome at the Council of Lyons (1274), and in the final years of the Palaiologoi, John VIII agreed to a unification of the Eastern and Western Churches at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–9). The tension between Byzantine spirituality and empire – and in particular an impoverished empire – is explored in Chapter 5, which considers an elaborate liturgical vestment made in Constantinople and sent to the metropolitan of Kiev and all of Russia in the early fifteenth century (Figures 5.2–5.5). Embedded within the elaborate liturgical cycle are representations of the future Emperor John VIII alongside his bride Anna of Moscow, in addition to her parents and the Metropolitan Photios, who was appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople. While the vestment celebrates the union through marriage of the Muscovite and Byzantine royal houses, it ultimately emphasizes Orthodoxy as the source of their unity above all. Chapter 5 argues that imperial Constantinople is positioned as the source for Orthodoxy, and in this way the *sakkos* is read as a visual analog to the celebrated letter of Patriarch Anthony reminding the Grand Duke of Moscow that there could be no church without the empire.

* * *

By taking as a point of departure art objects themselves – their agency, status, and social lives – the present study brings conceptual issues of cultural exchange to the concrete level of material culture. The theoretical stakes therefore hinge upon the status of the art object. Following anthropologists who study the “social lives of things,” to borrow a phrase from Arjun Appadurai, this book assumes that gifts from the beleaguered late Byzantine Empire contain the kind of agency usually associated with individuals rather

than objects.⁵¹ As extended gestures of their givers, they become metonymic evocations of the desires and aspirations of their creators. While I insist on the strategic nature of gifts – and accordingly read their visual programs in light of the very precise political and ideological contexts of their creation and dissemination – it is imperative to distinguish between intention and reception, and to acknowledge that gifts mediate a middle ground. The analyses in the pages that follow are driven by the objects of analysis themselves and their precise formal and material properties. This book thus remains rooted in the techniques of art historical inquiry and hence attends to the particular formal idiom expressed in each instance. The particular rationale for the focus on things, however, is to be found in the historiography of Byzantine art itself within the wider art historical field. The insistence on looking closely at particular moments, monuments, and trajectories of cultural encounter serves as a means of countering broad generalizations about Byzantine pictorial “influence,” where the eastern empire is rendered passive and unchanging in a teleology that privileges the rise of the West. By interrogating the concrete transfer of objects, this book seeks to provide a more nuanced and dynamic account of medieval artistic exchange, one that takes into account the temporal dimensions of power and the changing fates of empires.

⁵¹ This approach to objects and their cultural life is indebted to anthropological theorists discussed above, such as Mauss, Weiner, Bourdieu, Appadurai, and Kopytoff, as well as to scholars of literary and cultural studies, such as Bill Brown and Bruno Latour. See Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry*, 28(1) (2001), 1–22; and Bill Brown, “Reification, Reanimation and the American Uncanny,” *Critical Inquiry*, 32(2) (2006), 175–207; and Bruno Latour, “Introduction: How to Resume the Task of Tracing Associations” and “Third Source of Uncertainty: Objects Too Have Agency” in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford, 2005), 1–17 and 63–86, respectively. These investigations of “thing theory” have been fruitfully embraced by art historians such as Jennifer L. Roberts in “Copley’s Cargo: Boy with a Squirrel and the Dilemma of Transit,” *American Art*, 21(2) (2007), 20–41. A useful point of entry to this debate is Fiona Candlin and R. Guins (eds.), *The Object Reader. In Sight: Visual Culture* (Abingdon, 2008).

PART I

Adventus: the emperor and the city

Introduction to Part I

On August 15, 1261, Michael VIII Palaiologos entered Constantinople, after the fifty-seven-year Latin occupation of the famed Byzantine capital resulting from the violent conquests of the Fourth Crusade. Like victorious emperors of the past, his *adventus* followed the triumphal route from the Golden Gate along the Mese to the Great Church and Palace.¹ As in previous eras, it featured potent symbols of divine grace as part of the triumphal repertoire of imperial ceremonial, but it also struck a new tone of thanksgiving. After all, Michael was not returning to the imperial city from conquests at the fringes of an expansive empire, but rather was celebrating the restoration of the heart of a fragmented and beleaguered one, the Queen of Cities, which bore associations of sacral-imperial authority like no other. The emperor's solemn procession took place on the feast day of the Dormition of the Virgin and featured special reverence for the icon of the Theotokos from the Hodegon Monastery.² That icon was installed high on one of the towers of the Golden Gate for the initial prayers and it led the emperor's procession into the city.³

¹ On the *adventus*, see E. H. Kantorowicz, "The 'King's Advent' and the Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina," *ArtB*, 26(4) (1944), 207–31; Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981); Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986); and for a western perspective, see David A. Warner, "Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich: The Ceremony of *Adventus*," *Speculum*, 76(2) (2001), 255–83.

² Akropolites makes the point that although the emperor arrived at Constantinople on the previous day, he waited until the next morning for his *adventus*. See Ruth Macrides, *George Akropolites: The History* (Oxford, 2007), §88. On the Virgin Hodegetria, see Robert Lee Wolff, "Footnote to an Incident of the Latin Occupation of Constantinople: The Church and the Icon of the Hodegetria," *Traditio*, 6 (1948), 319–28; and more recently, C. Angelidi and T. Papamastorakis, "The Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Hodegon Monastery" in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens, 2000), 373–87; and Bissera Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, 2006), 109–43.

³ Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 383–4, §88: "Climbing up to one of the towers of the Golden Gate, with the image of the Theotokos which is named after the monastery *ton Odegon*, [the metropolitan of Kyzikos] recited the prayers in the hearing of all."

Michael's *adventus* was staged not only to coincide with the Virgin's feast day to honor her as the protector of the city but also to showcase the emperor's piety and the divinely sanctioned nature of the reconquest. Contemporary historian George Akropolites, who witnessed the event, emphasizes the reverential tone of the 1261 *adventus*. His description conveys the solemn ceremonial mood through gestures and comportment, specifically through a ritual cycle of prayer and prostration. He describes a staggered progression of ritual gestures of reverence led by the emperor as follows:

The monarch took off his *kalyptra* and, bending his knee, fell to the ground and all those with him who were behind him fell to their knees. When the first of the prayers had been recited and the deacon made the motion to rise up, all stood up and called out the "Kyrie Eleeson" 100 times. And when these were finished another prayer was pronounced by the bishop. What happened for the first prayer happened in turn for the second and so on until the completion of all the prayers. When this holy ritual had taken place in this way, the emperor entered the Golden Gate in a manner more reverential to God than imperial; for he proceeded on foot, while the icon of the Mother of God preceded him.⁴

This arresting performance of thanksgiving, for Akropolites, gave the spiritual precedence over the imperial in its stress on reverence. As Ruth Macrides has demonstrated, Michael's *adventus* emphasized thanksgiving far more than victory.⁵

This is not to say that the *adventus* was not marked by joy as well. Akropolites makes it clear that all Romans "felt gladness of heart and immense joy" at the event. But this "extreme pleasure" was paired with near doubt "because of the unexpectedness of the event."⁶ As we will see in the following chapters, the restoration of Constantinople to Byzantine rule was attributed neither to Michael's military might nor to his diplomatic prowess, but to divine favor alone. Michael's role in the restoration of Constantinople, in other words, was promoted as emphatically instrumental, not causal.

Michael's *adventus* is distinctive in its innovation. While selectively drawing on ceremonial terms inherited from his predecessors, it was ritually choreographed to emphasize the divine nature of the Byzantine restoration

⁴ *Ibid.*; and BFP, 20. Akropolites was commissioned to write thirteen prayers, each with a different theme, to be read out by the metropolitan at the Golden Gate. The prayers themselves do not survive, but Holobolos preserves the subject of each of the prayers. See Ruth Macrides, "The New Constantine and the New Constantinople – 1261?" *BMGS*, 6 (1980), 36–7.

⁵ Macrides, "The New Constantine," 13. See also Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 383–8; and Vincent Puech, "La refondation religieuse de Constantinople par Michel VIII Paléologue" in Patrick Boucheron and Jacques Chiffoleau (eds.), *Religion et Société Urbaine au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2000), 351–63.

⁶ Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 383–4, §88. The "unexpectedness" of the restoration is reiterated in *typika*, as will be discussed in Chapter 2.

of the imperial city. This shift in ritual register sets the tone, to a certain extent, for our understanding of the final centuries of the Byzantine Empire ushered in by Michael's reconquest of Constantinople.⁷ In his *adventus*, we see the emergence of a new imperial image that is indebted to previous models of rule, but is simultaneously reconfigured in the service of contemporary exigencies.⁸

Gilbert Dagron's analysis of the role of ceremonial in the negotiation of the imperial office emphasized that the transitions and transformations enacted by the Byzantine *adventus* "gave the emperor not power, which he

⁷ The principal studies of the Palaiologan reconquest of Constantinople remain Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII," *DOP*, 47 (1993), 243–61; Macrides, "The New Constantine," 13–41; and Ruth Macrides, "From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi: Imperial Models in Decline and Exile" in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries; Papers from the Twenty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. Andrews, March 1992* (Aldershot, 1994), 269–82. On early Palaiologan patronage in Constantinople, see Alice-Mary Talbot, "Empress Theodora Palaiologina, Wife of Michael VIII," *DOP*, 46 (1992), 295–303 [repr. *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2001)]; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, "Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period" in Brooks (ed.), *Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, 76–97; Vassilios Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel, 1204–1328: Verfall und Zerstörung, Restaurierung, Umbau und Neubau von Profan- und Sakralbauten* (Wiesbaden, 1994); as well as his "The Urban Physiognomy of Constantinople from the Latin Conquest through the Palaiologan Era" in Brooks (ed.), *Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, 98–117. The main monographs on Michael VIII Palaiologos are Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West, 1258–1282: A Study in Byzantine–Latin Relations* (Cambridge, MA, 1959); and C. Chapman, *Michel Paléologue, restaurateur de l'Empire byzantin (1261–1282)* (Paris, 1926). See also Dölger, "Die dynastische Familienpolitik des Kaisers Michael VIII. Palaiologo" in M. Grabmann and K. Hofmann (eds.), *Festschrift Eduard Eichmann zum 70. Geburtstag: Dargebracht von seinen Freunden und Schülern in Verbindung mit Wilhelm Laforet* (Paderborn, 1940), 179–90 [repr. *Paraspora: 30 Aufsätze zur Geschichte, Kultur und Sprache des byzantinischen Reiches* (Munich, 1961), 178–88]; and Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'Empire byzantin*, 115–28.

⁸ Macrides, "From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi," 274, points out that this first Palaiologan imperial *adventus* combined Komnenian ceremonial with even older practice: in its honoring of the icon of the Virgin, it echoed the triumphant entrances of John II and Manuel I Komnenos, but the twelfth-century triumphs were not staged at the Golden Gate. The Komnenian prominence of the icon of the Virgin, in turn, followed the tenth-century precedent of Tzimiskes. It should be noted that Michael was not the first emperor to adopt such a spectacular public performance of humility. In its tone, it is also reminiscent of the kind of humility that characterized Heraclius's ceremonial, especially the thanksgiving procession at the Golden Gate following the Avar siege, on which see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 75–6. Note that Heraclius's *adventus* with the True Cross in Jerusalem, when he famously bathed the ground with tears, is represented in a seventh-century relief in Mren, on which see Christina Maranci, "The Humble Heraclius: Revisiting the North Portal at Mren," *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 31 (2009), 359–72, which substantially advances the arguments of Michel and Nicole Thierry, "La cathédrale de Mren et sa décoration," *CA*, 21 (1971), 43–77. Stephan Borgehammar, "Heraclius Learns Humility: Two Early Latin Accounts Composed for the Celebration of Exaltatio Crucis" in *Millennium: Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.*, 6 (2009), 145–201, has addressed Heraclius in the West, and the relation of the Latin legend to Byzantine traditions.

already possessed, but legitimacy, which he still lacked.”⁹ This assessment strikes an especially poignant note with regard to Michael Palaiologos. While he had risen through the ranks in Nicaea, home of the Byzantine Empire in exile, and had been crowned co-emperor there, the restoration of Constantinople – and the reverential tone of his *adventus* – conferred a sense of legitimacy on him and his line, despite the fact that he was, essentially, a usurper. This point is elaborated in subsequent chapters, especially Chapters 2 and 3, which interpret two of the most prominent public images of Michael VIII created after the restoration of Constantinople to Byzantine rule: the no longer extant bronze monument erected in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles and his gold coinage that disseminated a new imperial image beyond the recently restored borders of the late Byzantine Empire (Figures 3.2–3.4). Both depict the emperor on knee and thus promulgate a message of seeming humility in the service of an agenda of legitimation. What follows immediately in Chapter 1, however, turns back to a time when Michael possessed neither full imperial power nor legitimacy. In Nicaea, on the eve of the reclamation of Constantinople, the emperor’s effigy was embroidered on an elaborate silk *peplos* commissioned as a diplomatic gift for the Genoese in conjunction with the Treaty of Nymphaion (Figure 1.1). Analysis of this sumptuous Byzantine silk of unparalleled political and pictorial complexity reveals the mechanisms by which the imperial image was deployed strategically at a moment of utmost diplomatic urgency.

Collectively, the three chapters that constitute Part I of this study approach the opening years of the Palaiologan period and the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople through the lens of the gift. An initial analysis of the extant silken gift offered to seal the diplomatic pact designed to retake the city precedes two chapters that explore the complex visual language of imperial thanksgiving and commemoration that followed the emperor’s reverential *adventus*. Each case reveals finely calibrated gradations of seeming imperial generosity in the service of ultimately establishing hierarchy and Palaiologan sovereignty.

⁹ Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 65.

1 | The imperial image and the end of exile

When Manuel Holobolos described the image of Michael Palaiologos given to the Genoese in conjunction with the Treaty of Nymphaion, he drew analogies with a city's fortification, its adamantine walls and parapets, in order to emphasize the protective power of the portrait. Such invocations linking the supernaturally efficacious material image to the city's walls echo the role of the Virgin's icon in the protection of Constantinople.¹ His further characterization of the emperor's likeness as a *pharmakon* casts the image into the realm of the talismanic or amuletic by underscoring the potency and agency of the image as a cure or remedy. But the term itself is laden with ambiguity and contradiction in its wide semantic range covering both source and solution, poison and cure. It cannot be reduced to a single definition, but rather is marked by its irreducibility and ambivalence. This double-edged valence of the term *pharmakon* has inspired modern theorists to explain the contradiction inherent in gift-giving, that is, the fact that giving usually concerns gaining and is thus strategically self-centered rather than disinterested.²

Given the power attributed to the image by Holobolos, we might imagine the imperial portrait as a majestic effigy of the emperor standing frontally immobile and commanding the viewer's respect as an icon worthy of the potency ascribed to it – in other words, we might expect that it exhibited the hieratic calm of traditional imperial portraiture. This is not the case, as Holobolos was speaking about a particular and peculiar imperial image. In fact, his oration, as we will see below, describes two silken imperial portraits given to the Genoese. One of these survives in the collection of Genoa's Museo di Sant'Agostino (Figure 1.1).³ Until the seventeenth century, it was held in the Treasury of San Lorenzo, Genoa's cathedral, which is represented

¹ See note 28 below for more on the oration. The role of the image of the Virgin and Constantinople will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

² Again, as noted in the introduction, the *pharmakon* features prominently in the studies of Derrida in particular. See also the discussion of the linguistic roots of the double-edged vocabulary of gift-giving by Benveniste, "Gift and Exchange."

³ At the time of this chapter's composition, the silk had been de-installed from the Palazzo Bianco Gallery, where it had been installed since 1950 with the accession number GPB 2073, and was awaiting transfer to Florence to undergo an extensive conservation program. Upon its return to



Figure 1.1 Embroidered silk of St Lawrence, associated saints, and Michael VIII Palaiologos, 1261, Genoa, Civiche Collezioni, Museo di Sant'Agostino

at the center of the textile. Measuring approximately one and one-quarter by three and three-quarter meters (1.28×3.74 meters), the large, well-preserved purple embroidery depicts in two ten-scene registers the life of St Lawrence and associated martyrs punctuated by an image of the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos with the Archangel Michael and St Lawrence at its center. Although it adheres mainly to Byzantine embroidery customs and depicts a Palaiologan emperor at its center, its intended destination, Genoa, is equally prominent: the inscriptions are Latin rather than Greek, and the subject matter, the life of St Lawrence, corresponds to its destination, the cathedral of San Lorenzo in Genoa. The dual emphasis of the silk is explained by the fact that it was custom created as a gift for the Genoese in conjunction with the Treaty of Nymphaion, the political pact through which Michael secured overseas assistance to reclaim Constantinople from the Latins.

The imperial effigy on the silk in Genoa is thus embedded within an elaborate pictorial cycle that relates simultaneously to the gift's destination, the church of San Lorenzo, and to the primary motivation for which it was commissioned, the restoration of Constantinople to Byzantine rule. In this sense, Holobolos's invocation of the *pharmakon* seems especially poignant. The imagery of the silk, with its embedded portrait of the emperor, sets off a chain of associations that on one level seems generous, even flattering for its recipients, and at the same time, when read more closely, articulates Byzantine superiority. In this sense, the silk does not conform at all to our

Genoa, it will be installed in the Museo di Sant'Agostino. The primary studies of the Byzantine "pallio," as it has come to be known in the scholarship, are Pauline Johnstone, "The Byzantine 'Pallio' in the Palazzo Bianco at Genoa," *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 87 (1976), 99–108; Elena Parma Armani, "Nuove Indagini sul 'Pallio' Bizantino Duecentesco di San Lorenzo in Palazzo Bianco a Genova," *Studi di storia delle arte*, 5 (1983–85), 31–47; Peter Schreiner, "Zwei Denkmäler aus der frühen Paläologenzeit: Ein Bildnis Michels VIII. und der Genueser Pallio" in Marcel Restle (ed.), *Festschrift für Klaus Wessel zum 70. Geburtstag: In memoriam* (Munich, 1988), 249–57; Carla Falcone, "Il 'Pallio' bizantino di San Lorenzo a Genova: Una riconsiderazione," *Arte cristiana*, 84 (1996), 337–52; Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti, "Considerazioni finali, con una noterella minima sul Pallio di 'San Lorenzo,'" in Calderoni Masetti, Clario Di Fabio, and Mario Marcenaro (eds.), *Tessuti,oreficerie, miniature in Liguria, XIII–XV secolo* (Bordighera, 1999), 403–11; Andrea Paribeni, "Il pallio di San Lorenzo a Genova" in Antonio Iacobini and Mauro Della Valle (eds.), *L'arte di Bisanzio e l'Italia al tempo dei Paleologi 1261–1453 [Milion 5]* (Rome, 1999), 229–52; and Ida Toth, "The Narrative Fabric of the Genoese Pallio and the Silken Diplomacy of Michael VIII Palaiologos" in Hallie G. Meredith (ed.), *Objects in Motion: The Circulation of Religion and Sacred Objects in the Late Antique and Byzantine World* (Oxford, 2011), 91–109. Much of this chapter is a slightly revised version of Cecily J. Hilsdale, "The Imperial Image at the End of Exile: The Byzantine Embroidered Silk in Genoa and the Treaty of Nymphaion (1261)," *DOP*, 64 (2010), 151–99, which, it should be noted, includes color photos of the silk.

expectations of majestic, immobile, hieratic calm of imperial portraiture, as seen in earlier mosaics in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia invoked in the Introduction (Figures 0.1–0.3) or in the later manuscript images of Manuel II Palaiologos, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Instead, as this chapter will argue, the emperor is integrated into a complicated narrative of hagiographic largesse, one that hints at an ulterior message of imperial hierarchy. As a gift, one astutely described as a *pharmakon* by Holobolos, its logic is fundamentally contradictory and its extension was strategic.

Following an overview of the political context surrounding the textile's creation, this chapter considers first its main contemporary textual source, Holobolos's encomium to the emperor. It then turns to the imagery of the embroidered silk itself. An examination of the intersection of hagiographic and imperial imagery clarifies the implications of the silk's creation and extension as a diplomatic gift in conjunction with the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople in 1261. Hinging on a number of rivalries, including political rivalries among Byzantine Greek successor states and commercial rivalries among Italian maritime republics, this chapter argues that the imagery of the textile constitutes a visual encomium to Michael VIII, an encomium similar in many ways to the surviving imperial oration in which it is described, but one intended for a foreign and strategically significant audience. The end result is an image of imperial largesse particular to the emperor's diplomatic agenda on the eve of the end of exile, before his spectacularly reverential *adventus*, before he was hailed in earnest as the Emperor of the Romans and before he cultivated the epithet of New Constantine as part of his agenda of Palaiologan legitimation.

The end of exile: the Treaty of Nymphaion

The embroidered silk now in Genoa is associated with the 1261 Treaty of Nymphaion, the Genoese–Byzantine alliance forged with the intention of reconquering Constantinople from the Latins who had occupied the coveted imperial capital since 1204. With the Fourth Crusade and the establishment of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, the Venetians gained a decided commercial advantage over the Genoese, who were forced to cultivate alternate maritime enterprises, and the Byzantines were expelled from their imperial city and forced to regroup in exile. Although the restoration of Constantinople to Byzantine rule was accomplished in 1261, the city's successful reclamation did not depend fully on the Genoese assistance that was stipulated

in the treaty. The relationship of the treaty to the primary event it concerned is therefore an odd one: with hindsight, it appears that the Byzantine restoration of the imperial city was attained almost by accident, regardless of the treaty.⁴ The garrison and fleet had left Constantinople defenseless and Michael Palaiologos's general Alexios Strategopoulos entered the city without violence, causing the Latin rulers to flee. Yet the stakes of the treaty should not be underestimated. Through this pact, the Genoese entered into alliance with the schismatic Greeks against the Latins in Constantinople, an act that put them at risk of excommunication,⁵ and the Byzantine Empire in Nicaea, struggling for legitimation, received long-distance allies to support its ambitions. In this sense, we should read the treaty as the culmination of two major rivalries: the long-held commercial rivalry between the Italian maritime powers of Genoa and Venice, and at the same time the political rivalry between the Empire of Nicaea and the other Byzantine claimants in exile.

The 1204 conquest and occupation of Constantinople revealed the fragility of the Byzantine imperial office and called into question the limits of imperial authority and ideology. In its aftermath, a struggle for organized Byzantine resistance to Latin rule was divided among Nicaea in western Asia Minor, Epiros in Greece, and Trebizond on the southeast corner of the Black Sea. To consolidate the legacy of Byzantine imperium, each of these three successor states claimed its own emperor of the Romans and each had its eye on the recovery of Constantinople as the ultimate means of legitimation. Territorial control was merely one aspect of the self-fashioning of imperium in exile, where even commitment to Orthodoxy became a means of distinguishing among the three rival claimants.⁶ The fact that Nicaea engaged in unionist discussions, for example, proved a point of contention

⁴ The details of the treaty are discussed at greater length below.

⁵ Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 83–4; Peter Schreiner, “Bisanzio e Genova: Tentativo di un'analisi delle relazioni politiche, commerciali, e culturali” in *Studia Byzantino-Bulgarica* (Vienna, 1986), 2, 135–6. Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958–1528* (Chapel Hill, 1996), 150, describes the treaty as “an astute gamble” by the Genoese which put them at risk not only of excommunication by the Pope but also of revenge by the Venetians. Thus the treaty, according to Epstein, “combined business, pleasure from evening the score with Venice, and risk.”

⁶ Antony Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond* (Aldershot, 2004), 3, has characterized the ethos of this period of exile well: “While Constantinople remained in Latin hands and the Greek contenders sought to build up their own power bases outside the symbolic capital, the war had to be fought by different means, in which government and Orthodoxy, honour and legitimacy, ceremony and ritual were all key weapons. It was a fight for the aura, symbols and authority of imperial rule as much as for the real power that might accompany it. This was a battle to recreate the empire in exile; and each successor state sought to argue that it was the true inheritor of the power and authority of

against which Epirote and Trapezuntine factions positioned themselves. It is also during this period of exile that a more fully articulated form of a Byzantine “Hellenic” identity was cultivated.⁷ Michael Angold has argued that the concept of “Hellenic” as a pendant to “Roman” identity emerged in this period as a means of differentiating Nicene Greeks not only from the Latins but also from the other Greeks, particularly in Epiros.⁸ The Treaty of Nymphaion was therefore set on the eve of the reconquest of Constantinople, when the future configuration of the Byzantine Empire was still very much uncertain – when negotiations over Byzantine identity in exile were at their height and rivalries among claimants were still undetermined. It

the Byzantine Empire and that only its ruler could legitimately claim the titles and the attributes of the emperor.” See also Dimitar Angelov, “Byzantine Ideological Reactions to the Latin Conquest of Constantinople” in Angeliki Laiou (ed.), *Urbs Capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences* (Paris, 2005), 293–310, and also in the same volume, Alkmini Stavridou-Zafra, “The Political Ideology of the State of Epiros,” 311–23.

⁷ The literature on the subject of Hellenism in Byzantium, especially in relation to imperial ideology in Nicaea, is extensive. See Hélène Ahrweiler, “L’expérience nicéenne,” *DOP*, 29 (1975), 21–40; Ahrweiler, *L’idéologie politique de l’Empire byzantin*, 60–4; Michael Angold, “Byzantine ‘Nationalism’ and the Nicaean Empire,” *BMGS*, 1 (1975), 49–70; Michael Angold, “Greeks and Latins After 1204: The Perspective of Exile” in Benjamin Arbel, Bernard Hamilton, and David Jacoby (eds.), *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* (London, 1989), 63–86; P. Gounaridis, “Grecs, ‘Hellènes’ et ‘Romaines’ dans l’état Nicée” in Vasilēs Kremmydas, Chryssa Maltezou, and Nikolaos M. Panagiotakes (eds.), *Αφιέρωμα στον Νίκο Σβορώνο* (Rethymno, 1986), 1:248–57; Dionysios A. Zakynthinos, “Rome dans la pensée politique de Byzance du XIII^e au XV^e siècle: La ‘théorie romaine’ à l’épreuve des faits” in *Βυζάντιον: Αφιέρωμα στον Ανδρέα Ν. Στράτο* (Athens, 1986), 1:207–21; Speros Vryonis, Jr., “Byzantine Cultural Self-Consciousness in the Fifteenth Century” in Ćurčić and Mouriki (eds.), *The Twilight of Byzantium*, 5–14; Alexis Politis, “From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors” in David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity* (Aldershot, 1998), 1–14; Paul Magdalino, “Hellenism and Nationalism in Byzantium” in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1991), article XIV, 1–27; Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino, “The Fourth Kingdom and the Rhetoric of Hellenism” in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London, 1992), 139–56; J. Koder, “Griechische Identitäten im Mittelalter: Aspekte einer Entwicklung” in A. Avramea, A. E. Laiou, and E. Chrysos (eds.), *Βυζάντιο κράτος και κοινωνία. Μνήμη Νίκου Οικονομίδη* (Athens, 2003), 297–316; Angelov, “Byzantine Ideological Reactions,” 299–303; Roger Beaton, “Antique Nation? ‘Hellenes’ on the Eve of Greek Independence and in Twelfth-Century Byzantium,” *BMGS*, 31(1) (2007), 76–95; Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007), 317–88; Anthony Kaldellis, “Historicism in Byzantine Thought and Literature,” *DOP*, 61 (2007), 1–24; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 95–98; Gill Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge, 2008); and Claudia Rapp, “Hellenic Identity, Romanitas, and Christianity in Byzantium” in K. Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Aldershot, 2008), 127–47.

⁸ Angold, “Byzantine ‘Nationalism,’” 64. Cf. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 383. The particular relevance of Hellenism as the context for the textile in Genoa is addressed at greater length toward the end of this chapter.

presented the possibility of legitimacy for Nicene rulers through the restoration of the imperial city of New Rome.

From among the competing successor states of Nicaea, Epiros, and Trebizond, Nicaea under the Laskarids ultimately assumed dominance. Nicaea alone minted gold coinage during the interregnum, it was physically the closest of the three states mentioned above to Constantinople, and it was the first to claim a new ecumenical patriarch following the installation of a Latin patriarch of Constantinople.⁹ Through a rapid series of events, Michael Palaiologos assumed power of the Nicene Empire in exile: the death of Theodore Laskaris and the subsequent revolt against George Mouzalon resulted in the appointment of Michael as regent for, and then co-emperor with, John IV Laskaris, the eight-year-old heir to the empire. Success at the Battle of Pelagonia (1259), where Nicene forces overthrew the Epirote coalition, further secured the position of Nicaea generally and Michael Palaiologos in particular. This prompted an initial unsuccessful attempt at recovering Constantinople (the Siege of Galata) and set the stage for the Treaty of Nymphaion and the successful Byzantine restoration of Constantinople (1261).¹⁰

⁹ On the coinage of Nicaea, see *DOC* IV/2, nos. 447–540. Cécile Morrisson, “Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation” in *EHB*, 3:933, points out that Nicaea alone struck “a complete series of Komnenian denominations.” Theodore I Laskaris did not strike gold, but Vatatzes and Theodore II did. The main mint for the Nicene Empire was situated at Magnesia, which is where the treasury was also located. The city of Nicaea was the ecclesiastic center and residence of the patriarch – it was closer to Constantinople in order “to underline its claims to the succession, but the city was of quite secondary importance in the organization of the state” (*DOC* VI/1, no. 57). In 1208, Theodore Laskaris had Michael Autoreianos elected patriarch. His first act as patriarch, not surprisingly, was to crown and anoint Theodore and thus, in the words of Michael Angold, “The Byzantine Empire was born in exile”: *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (Cambridge, 1995), 516. See also Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea, 1204–1261* (London, 1975); Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1993), 19–37; Nicolas Oikonomides, “La rinascita delle istituzioni bizantine dopo il 1204” in P. Toubert and A. Paravicini Bagliani (eds.), *Federico II e il mondo mediterraneo* (Palermo, 1995), 320–32 [repr. *Society, Culture and Politics in Byzantium*, article XV]; and Günter Prinzing, “Das byzantinische Kaisertum im Umbruch – Zwischen regionaler Aufspaltung und erneuter Zentrierung in den Jahren 1204–1282” in R. Gundlach and H. Weber (eds.), *Legitimation und Funktion des Herrschers vom ägyptischen Pharao zum neuzeitlichen Diktator* (Stuttgart, 1992), 129–83.

¹⁰ See Deno J. Geanakoplos, “Greco-Latin Relations on the Eve of the Byzantine Restoration: The Battle of Pelagonia, 1259,” *DOP*, 7 (1953), 99–141; and Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologos*, 47–74. Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 29, rightly points out that the Battle of Pelagonia of 1259 marked a decisive change in the political situation. It is important to note that following the Battle of Pelagonia, Michael secured diplomatic alliances on many fronts – with the Seljuks, the Mongols, and the Bulgarians. The Genoese alliance therefore was one

The Treaty of Nymphaion thus aimed to distinguish Nicaea as the legitimate Greek successor state, while at the same time marking the culmination of a longer history of Byzantine–Genoese diplomatic relations that can be traced back to an initial alliance of the mid-twelfth century that also involved Italian commercial rivalries. Naval support was exchanged not merely for gold or silver but also for trading privileges.¹¹ The Byzantines relied on western mercenary assistance and Italian cities competed with each other for Byzantine commercial privileges, the most significant of which was exemption from or reduction of the *kommerkion*, the ten-percent excise tax on goods throughout the empire.¹² By the twelfth century, the Republics of Venice, Pisa, and Genoa vied for the favor of the Byzantine emperor to secure economic privileges. Although both Genoa and Pisa in the late eleventh century had focused their attentions on western Mediterranean trade while Venice dominated eastern trade, the crusader states provided all three cities with a common focus in the East. Venice had received substantial privileges from Alexios I Komnenos as early as 1081, and Pisa followed suit in 1111. It was not, however, until 1155 that Manuel Komnenos and the Genoese entered into an alliance. The Byzantine emperor at this time

component of the larger diplomatic strategy. See Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 33; and George Akropolites, 367–75.

¹¹ See F. Dölger and J. Karayannopoulos, *Byzantinische Urkundenlehre* (Munich, 1968), 1:89–107; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches: Von 565–1453*, part 3, *Regesten von 1204–1282* (Munich, 1932); Sandra Origone, *Bisanzio e Genova* (Genoa, 1997), 87–124; Michel Balard, *La Romanie génoise: XII^e–début du XV^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1978); Michel Balard, “The Genoese in the Aegean (1204–1566)” in B. Arbel, B. Hamilton, and D. Jacoby (eds.), *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* (London, 1989), 158–74; Gerald W. Day, *Genoa’s Response to Byzantium, 1155–1204: Commercial Expansion and Factionalism in a Medieval City* (Urbana, 1988); Società ligure di storia patria, *Genova, Pisa e il Mediterraneo tra due e trecento* (Genoa, 1984); M. Tangheroni, *Commercio e navigazione nel Medioevo* (Rome, 1996); and David Jacoby, “Byzantium, the Italian Maritime Powers, and the Black Sea Before 1204,” *BZ*, 100(2) (2007), 677–99. See also Angeliki Laiou-Thomadakis, “The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System, Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries,” *DOP*, 34–35 (1980–1), 177–222 [repr. *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1992), VII]; and her contributions to *EHB*, in particular “Economic and Noneconomic Exchange,” 2:681–96, “Exchange and Trade, Seventh–Twelfth Centuries,” 2:697–708, and “Economic Thought and Ideology,” 3:1123–44.

¹² On the *κομμέριον*, see David Jacoby, “Italian Privileges and Trade in Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade: A Reconsideration,” *Annuario de Estudios Medievales*, 24 (1994), 349–68 [repr. *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 1997), III]; Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 596–8; Nicolas Oikonomides, “The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy” in *EHB*, 3:987–88 and 1050–55; Nicolas Oikonomides, “The Economic Region of Constantinople: From Directed Economy to Free Economy, and the Role of the Italians” in Girolamo Arnaldi and Guglielmo Cavallo (eds.), *Europa medievale e mondo bizantino* (Rome, 1997); as well as Klaus-Peter Matschke, “Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money: Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries” in *EHB*, 2:771–806.

promised a trading quarter in Constantinople replete with a piazza, an *embolos*, and *skalai*,¹³ as well as a reduction of the *kommerkion* throughout the empire.¹⁴ In return, Genoa was to defend Constantinople and was forbidden to enter into alliances against her. In addition to such privileges, which were advantageous for trade, the Byzantines offered the municipal government of Genoa an annuity of 500 *hyperpyra* and two *pallia* of silk for fourteen years. Furthermore, the archbishop of Genoa was to receive sixty *hyperpyra* annually and one *pallium* of silk. Like most treaties of the time, the factors under consideration were reductions of taxes on trade within Constantinople and throughout the empire, cash (*hyperpyra*), and silk (a total of three *pallia* in this instance).¹⁵

The stipulations of this pact were not honored by either party: neither the full amount of money nor the silk was ever disbursed, and Genoa formed an alliance with one of Constantinople's main rivals, Sicily, within two years. By 1160, the Genoese finally received their quarter in the capital, but were driven out within another two years by the Venetians and Pisans, who had already established their own trading quarters there. After these same events recurred in 1170 (a reinstatement of the Genoese and an immediate attack on the compound by the Venetians), Manuel Komnenos

¹³ An ἔμβολος is a merchant street and σκάλαι are gangways for ships; both are advantageous for trade within the city and throughout the empire. On ἔμβολοι and the trading edge of the Golden Horn, see Paul Magdalino, "The Maritime Neighborhoods of Constantinople: Commercial and Residential Functions, Sixth to Twelfth Century," *DOP*, 55 (2001), 224 [repr. *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot, 2007), article III]. See also David Jacoby, "The Venetian Quarter of Constantinople from 1082 to 1261, Topographical Considerations" in C. Sode and S. Takács (eds.), *Novum Millennium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck, 19 December 1999* (Aldershot, 2001), 153–70.

¹⁴ Jacoby, "Italian Privileges," 359, points out that the *kommerkion* reduction did not apply to all commodities. Genoa's privileges were modeled on the Pisan precedent and applied only to imported goods, though there was a total exemption on bullion in order to encourage its importation. Day, *Genoa's Response*, 24–5, notes that Genoa was also re-enacting privileges promised by the Holy Roman Empire and establishing new alliances with Marseilles and Sicily. He describes 1154–61 as a formative period for the Genoese in terms of "networks of privileged trade throughout the Mediterranean [so that] their parochial attitudes changed to more cosmopolitan ones." See Oikonomides, "The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy" in *EHB*, 3:1053–58; and Schreiner, "Bisanzio e Genova," 133–5.

¹⁵ While the money was paid to the government immediately, the silk was not; moreover, the archbishop received neither money nor cloth. Origone, *Bisanzio e Genova*, 264–74, includes an appendix with all of the surviving acts of the diplomatic relations between Byzantium and Genoa. Jacoby, "Italian Privileges," 359, points out that the commercial and fiscal privileges granted to the Venetians, the Pisans, and the Genoese differed greatly. See Steven A. Epstein, *Purity Lost: Transgressing Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1000–1400* (Baltimore, 2007), 98–110. See below, 41, for the renewal of the 1155 provisions in 1261.

expelled the Venetians.¹⁶ These events were not minor disputes relegated to the realm of trade alone. Rather, they carried substantial political weight, with ramifications extending throughout the Mediterranean in the following century.¹⁷ The enmity that Genoa felt toward Venice may have begun with twelfth-century trade competition, but ultimately Venice's commercial supremacy during the Latin occupation of Constantinople, including the Venetian defeat and expulsion of Genoa from Acre in 1258, exacerbated the rivalry and propelled the Genoese toward a second major alliance with the Byzantines, specifically with the Empire of Nicaea, headed by Michael Palaiologos, and it is here that the story of the silk in Genoa begins in earnest.

In March 1261 Byzantine and Genoese leaders signed the treaty in Nymphaion that solidified their stance against Venice.¹⁸ Previously, in 1260, an advance Genoese embassy had opened negotiations with Michael Palaiologos, then regent for and co-emperor with John IV Laskaris.¹⁹ Sources confirm that both parties were united in enmity toward Venice: Michael wished to re-establish Constantinople as the rightful seat of Byzantine imperial power and Genoa desired commercial supremacy, which the Venetians had secured during the Latin occupation. The treaty was signed on 13 March in Nymphaion and was ratified in Genoa on 10 July. Constantinople was reconquered by Michael's general Strategopoulos on 25 July, and the emperor in exile triumphantly entered the city on 15 August, the feast of the Dormition of the Virgin.²⁰

¹⁶ Manuel arrested and expelled the Venetians in March 1171 and also confiscated their goods. According to Joseph Gill, the attack was merely "attributed" to the Venetians by Manuel, while they were not in fact responsible: "Venice, Genoa and Byzantium," *ByzF*, 10 (1985), 60. On the Genoese quarter, see C. Desimoni, "I Genovesi e i loro quartieri in Costantinopoli nel secolo XIII," *Giornale Linguistico di Archeologia, Storia e Belle Arti*, 3 (1876), 217–74.

¹⁷ Relations between Byzantines and Italians living in Constantinople were especially tense following the Latin massacre by Andronikos I in 1182. See discussion in Day, *Genoa's Response*, 27–9; and Gill, "Venice, Genoa and Byzantium," 60–2.

¹⁸ As confirmed by three unrelated sources – Genoese, Greek, and Venetian – the negotiations leading up to the treaty seem to have been initiated by the Genoese, specifically by Guglielmo Boccanegra, "Captain of the People and virtual dictator of the (Genoese) Commune." See Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 85.

¹⁹ The Genoese ambassadors Guglielmo Visconti and Guarnieri Giudice presumably stayed in the Empire of Nicaea through March 1261. Genoese annalist Caffaro narrates the events, an excerpt of which is offered by Parma Armani, "Nuove Indagini," 34–5. The animosity toward Venice is explicit in this text. See C. Manfroni, "Le relazioni fra Genova, l'Impero bizantino e i Turchi," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, 28 (1898), 792; Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 85–7; Origone, *Bisanzio e Genova*, 117; and Schreiner, "Bisanzio e Genova," 135–7.

²⁰ On the *adventus*, see the discussion in the introduction to Part I.

The treaty called for a permanent alliance between Byzantium and Genoa.²¹ Fifty Genoese ships were placed at Michael's disposal for the reconquest of Constantinople²² and, if victorious, the Genoese would receive all the maritime rights that the Venetians had held previously. These included the right to trade duty-free throughout the empire (present Byzantine territories as well as those to be conquered in the future), a merchant quarter in Constantinople and other significant cities, exclusive access to Black Sea ports, and absolute possession of the city of Smyrna. In exchange for these privileges, Genoa was obliged to defend the empire in times of war and to prevent the arming of warships against Constantinople in Genoese waters. In addition, a clause from the unsuccessful 1155 alliance was renewed.²³ To guarantee Genoa's commercial supremacy,²⁴ Michael was to present 500 *hyperpyra* and two *pallia* of silk to the Commune of Genoa annually and sixty *hyperpyra* and one *pallium* to the Archbishop of Genoa annually.²⁵ The two treaties, separated by more than a century and by the loss of Constantinople, involve a different set of privileges and yet each specifies, in addition to specie, the transfer of silk. Silk was the precious, portable, and prestigious currency of Byzantine diplomacy.²⁶

²¹ A Latin copy of the treaty survives in the Genoese state archive: Archivio Segreto 2724 (B 5/39). The stipulation of the treaty can be found in Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden*, 3:36–38; and Manfroni, “Relazioni,” 791–809 and 647–67. See also Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Paleologus*, 75–91; Origone, *Bisanzio e Genova*, 113–24, especially 119–22; and G. Caro, “Genova e la Supremazia sul Mediterraneo (1257–1311),” *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, n.s. 14 (1974), 1:100–13. The only Greek account of the Treaty of Nymphaion is preserved in Holobolos's oration, discussed below.

²² Of the fifty ships allocated, only sixteen vessels were actually dispatched: Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Paleologus*, 86–7. The Byzantine emperor was responsible for the expense of provisioning the ships.

²³ The text is explicit on this. See Manfroni, “Relazioni,” 795. Both in 1168 and 1192, the original terms of the 1155 alliance were almost reinstated, according to G. W. Day, “Byzantino-Genoese Diplomacy and the Collapse of Emperor Manuel's Western Policy, 1168–71,” *Byzantion*, 48(2) (1978), 396 and 399.

²⁴ Article 4 is summarized in Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Paleologus*, 87–9; and Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 34. See Jacoby, “Italian Privileges,” 359; Schreiner, “Zwei Denkmäler,” 249; and Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 149–51. In the words of Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 230, Genoa would receive essentially “le chiavi del potere economico dell'impero.”

²⁵ Manfroni, “Relazioni,” 795: “duo palia deaurata . . . et palium unum deauratum ut memoratur in privilegio felicitis memorie domini Emmanuelis imperatoris quondam grecorum.” Schreiner, “Zwei Denkmäler,” 253 n. 21, has noted that this repeats the provisions of the earlier treaty of Manuel I Komnenos and suggests that they had not been fulfilled.

²⁶ Byzantine textiles, and high grades of silk in particular, are widely acknowledged to have been an important component of diplomacy throughout the medieval Mediterranean. Silk offered the maximum advantage for long-distance diplomacy: it was easily transported – lightweight and flexible – and bore maximum economic value, sometimes equivalent to specie. The

Verbal and visual tribute

Greek sources are largely silent concerning the Treaty of Nymphaion. Neither Akropolites nor Pachymeres provides an account of the treaty's details, presumably because its terms were disadvantageous for the Byzantines. The silence is also understandable given that the reconquest of Constantinople ultimately had little to do with Genoese assistance; instead, it is attributed by most modern historians to luck and by Byzantine contemporaries to divine will.²⁷ The only Greek text to describe the Treaty of Nymphaion in any

combination of portability, cultural prestige, and high monetary value guaranteed silk's inclusion alongside specie in a tenth-century imperial packing list for military expeditions to be used for diplomacy on the road, as noted in the introduction. See Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, 108–11, 126–7. Scholarship on Byzantine silk is vast. On silk production and economics, see R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum*, 20(1) (1945), 1–42 [repr. *Byzantium and the World Around It: Economic and Institutional Relations* (London, 1978), III]; Anna Muthesius, "The Byzantine Silk Industry: Lopez and Beyond," *Journal of Medieval History*, 19 (1993), 1–67 [repr. *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving* (London, 1995), 255–314]; Nicolas Oikonomides, "Silk Trade and Production in Byzantium from the Sixth to the Ninth Century: The Seals of the Kommerkiarioi," *DOP*, 40 (1986), 33–53 [repr. *Social and Economic Life in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2004), VIII]; George C. Maniatis, "Organization, Market Structure, and Modus Operandi of the Private Silk Industry in Tenth-Century Byzantium," *DOP*, 53 (1999), 263–332, as well as numerous studies by David Jacoby, including "Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade," *BZ*, 84–5 (1991–92), 452–500 [repr. *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 1997), VII]; "Silk Crosses the Mediterranean" in G. Airal di (ed.), *Le vie del Mediterraneo: Idee, uomini, oggetti (secoli XI–XVI)* (Genoa, 1997), 35–79 [repr. *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 2001), X]; "The Silk Trade of Late Byzantine Constantinople" in *İstanbul Üniversitesi 550. Yıl, Uluslararası Bizans V^e Osmanlı Sempozyumu (XV. Yüzyıl): 30–31 Mayıs 2003*, edited by S. Atasoy (Istanbul, 2004), 130–44; and "Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture" in Brooks (ed.), *Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, 20–41. Particularly attentive to the role of Genoa in Mediterranean textile trade is Jacoby, "Genoa, Silk Trade and Silk Manufacture in the Mediterranean Region (ca. 1100–1300)" in Calderoni Masetti et al. (eds.), *Tessuti,oreficerie, miniature*, 11–40 [repr. *Commercial Exchange Across the Mediterranean: Byzantium, the Crusader Levant, Egypt and Italy* (Aldershot, 2005), XI]. On silk and diplomacy, see Jonathan Shepard, "Silks, Skills and Opportunities in Byzantium: Some Reflexions," *BMGS*, 21 (1997), 246–57; Anna Muthesius, "Silken Diplomacy" in Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 237–48; and Franziska E. Schlosser, "Weaving a Precious Web: The Use of Textiles in Diplomacy," *BSI*, 63 (2005), 45–52. On the guild system and the *Book of the Eparch*, see George C. Maniatis, "The Guild System in Byzantium and Medieval Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Organizational Structures, Regulatory Mechanisms and Behavioral Patterns," *Byzantion*, 76 (2006), 516–59. On silk and cultural exchange more broadly, see David Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West," *DOP*, 58 (2004), 197–240; and Brubaker, "The Elephant and the Ark," 175–95, especially 189–94. Both papers were part of the 2002 Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, "Realities of the Arts of the Medieval Mediterranean, 800–1500."

²⁷ Michael's role in the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople as the instrument of divine will is addressed in the next two chapters.

detail is an encomium to Michael Palaiologos composed by Holobolos.²⁸ The encomium elaborates the details of the Genoese–Byzantine negotiations in an attempt to praise the emperor’s skilled diplomacy, and also describes the exchange of diplomatic gifts, including the textile that still survives in Genoa.

According to Ruth Macrides’s generally accepted chronology, Holobolos’s three encomia for Michael VIII were composed as a series to be delivered on three successive Christmases: 1265, 1266, and 1267.²⁹ The first oration narrates imperial deeds that took place from 1259 to 1261, including the Battle of Pelagonia, the siege at Galata, and the Treaty of Nymphaion; the second focuses on the emperor’s return to Constantinople in 1261; and the third and final address his proclamation as emperor and his building activities. In praising the emperor’s skilled diplomacy at the Treaty of Nymphaion, Holobolos’s first oration claims that the Genoese ambassadors, after an eloquent speech honoring the Byzantine emperor, swore oaths and received gifts of silk (*peploi*): “swearing oaths of allegiance to you and receiving two gorgeous *peploi* – a generous gift of your Majesty worth everything to them. They turned home, praising your kindness with thundering voice and proclaiming you a King like no other.”³⁰ The orator then offers a lengthy description of the two gifts, insisting that he “must leave a record of them.” The first *peplos*, which is only briefly recorded, depicted the emperor’s “god-like form.”³¹ The description of the second, however, is more detailed and leaves no ambiguity about its technique or iconography. This second *peplos*,

²⁸ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:30–50 (speech begins on 46); and Siderides, “Μανουήλ Ὀλοβώλου,” 168–91 (speech begins on 174). On Holobolos, see M. Treu, “Manuel Holobolos,” *BZ*, 5 (1896), 538–59; C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1204–ca. 1310)* (Nicosia, 1982), 52–8; Ruth Macrides, “Holobolos,” *ODB*; and *PLP* no. 21047. On Holobolos’s scholarly engagement, which included the translation of Latin texts into Greek, see below, note 135.

²⁹ Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 16–20. The dating of Holobolos’s three orations has been the subject of considerable debate. Dölger, “Die dynastische Familienpolitik,” and Schreiner, “Zwei Denkmäler,” 249–57, dated the first speech to Christmas 1261. Of the studies of the textile in Genoa, Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 231, is the first to consider the textile in light of Macrides’s revised dating.

³⁰ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:47; and Siderides, “Μανουήλ Ὀλοβώλου,” 188. Unless otherwise noted, translations are the author’s. Particular thanks are due to Anthony Kaldellis for discussing the oration’s lexical nuances and possible interpretations. Holobolos uses myriad cloth- and garment-related words in the passage describing the Genoese–Byzantine encounter (ἱμάτιον, ἔνδυμα, χιτῶνα), but describes the silken gifts as *peploi*. On the terminology, *peplos* versus *pallium*, see Falcone, “Il ‘Pallio’ bizantino,” 346 n. 16.

³¹ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:47.8–10; and Siderides, “Μανουήλ Ὀλοβώλου,” 188. While Holobolos rushes over the iconography, he lingers on the medium: ὁ μὲν τὴν σὴν θεοειδῆ περιεῖχε μορφήν· οὐκ ἐκ χρυσοῦ ἢ τινος ἄλλης πολυτίμου ὕλης ἐσκευασμένον, ἀλλ’ ἐκ χρωμάτων κομμωτικῶν. Thus, this first *peplos* was woven with colored threads or even painted, although the latter seems unlikely.

the encomiast claims, is fashioned in gold threads and depicts the glorious passion of St Lawrence and his companions.³² Holobolos describes a tableau of the agonies of the martyrs, lingering on the instruments of their torture: “One could see there the display of the wise martyrs in the face of tyranny, their noble resolution, the varied and inventive punishments inflicted upon them by their torturers: the iron nails, the *trochanters*, torsion, fire, swords, chains, fetters, prisons, and every other instruments of torture.”³³ He further informs us that these visual details were explained by Latin inscriptions (Ἱταλικῶν γραμμάτων)³⁴ and could be read as a book. “The *peplos* was not a *peplos* but a book,” he writes, “and a book not of God’s prophetic commandments but of the trials of youthful martyrs of Christ.”³⁵

Holobolos’s verbal description has been linked to the surviving textile in Genoa.³⁶ The iconography of St Lawrence is exceedingly rare in Byzantine art and the addition of Latin inscriptions is rarer still. Even the notion of reading the silk as a book matches the format of the extant textile, on which the trials and tortures of St Lawrence, St Sixtus, and St Hippolytus unfold from left to right along two registers in three distinct yet continuous narrative segments. But what does it mean that the orator’s description matches the surviving textile in Genoa?

There are a number of ways to explain this coincidence of text and artifact.³⁷ On the basis of the imperial oration, Pauline Johnstone, in the first thorough art historical investigation of the silk, has argued that the silk in

See Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 231, who speculates on the relevance of the reference to the Assyrian king, which follows on lines 10–12.

³² Treu, *Orationes*, 1:47.12–15; and Siderides, “Μανουῆλ Ὀλοβώλου,” 188–9: τῷ δ’ ἄλλῳ ἐκ χρυσοῦ πρὸς κλωστήρα τετορευμένου οἱ τοῦ καλλινίκου μάρτυρος Λαυρεντίου καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ περιφανεῖς ἐνεχαράχθησαν ἄγωνες καὶ τὰ μέχρι θανάτου διὰ Χριστὸν σκάμματα.

³³ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:47.15–25; and Siderides, “Μανουῆλ Ὀλοβώλου,” 189: εἶδε τις ἂν ἐκεῖ τὰς πρὸ προσώπου τυραννικοῦ τῶν σοφῶν μαρτύρων παραστάσεις, τὰς γενναίας αὐτῶν ἐνστάσεις, τὰς παρὰ τῶν βασανιστῶν σκευοφορουμένας τούτοις πολυειδεῖς καὶ πολυτρόπους κολάσεις, τοὺς σιδηροῦς ὄνυχας, τοὺς τροχαντήρας, τοὺς καταπέλτας, τὸ πῦρ, τὰ ξίφη, τὰς ἀλύσεις, τὰ δεσμά, τὰς εἰρκτάς καὶ πᾶν ἄλλο βασανιστήριον ὄργανον, ὧν ἕκαστον καὶ ἐπιστήμασι δι’ Ἱταλικῶν γραμμάτων ἐνεσημαίνετο· οὕτως ἔφερε θαυμασίως ὁ μέγας πάντα πέπλος ἐκεῖνος τὸ ἱερὸν τοῖς γενναίοις ἀνάθημα μάρτυσιν οἰκονομίᾳ βασιλικῇ, ὡς ἄρα οὐ πέπλος ὁ πέπλος ἦν, ἀλλὰ βίβλος· καὶ βίβλος οὐ προστογμάτων θεοῦ τὸ προφητικόν, ἀλλὰ σκαμμάτων νεανικῶν μαρτύρων Χριστοῦ. Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 232, points out that despite all the detail, Holobolos does not mention the grate or grill of Lawrence’s martyrdom. Moreover, he makes reference to other instruments that are not part of the hagiographic tradition or the iconography of the textile.

³⁴ See Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 242 n. 27 on this phrase. ³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Holobolos’s oration has been cited by most of the major articles dedicated to the Genoese textile (by Johnstone, Parma Armani, Falcone, and Paribeni).

³⁷ The most significant difference between the two is that Holobolos describes the hagiographic narrative of the *peplos*, but does not mention the image of the emperor alongside the archangel and St Lawrence. This critical omission is discussed in the later part of the chapter.

Genoa was one of the very textiles specified in the Treaty of Nymphaion itself and that it was given to the Genoese in fulfillment of the terms of the treaty at some point after the 1261 Byzantine restoration of Constantinople, probably in either 1262 or 1267, when Byzantine–Genoese relations were strong.³⁸ Peter Schreiner, however, has called attention to the differences between the orator’s description of the negotiations and the surviving copy of the treaty, noting that according to Holobolos, the Genoese ambassadors were given two elaborate *peploi*, whereas the treaty enumerates three textiles in total: two for the commune and one for the archbishop.³⁹ Even if the oration describes the exact silk in Genoa, the surviving cloth may not have been one of those stipulated in the original treaty.⁴⁰ Following Schreiner, Carla Falcone points out that Holobolos’s emphasis on the textile in his oration suggests that it was a gift for a very specific circumstance, not an annual donation stipulated by a pact.⁴¹ The critical distinction to bear in mind is between silks bearing imagery custom-made for a specific diplomatic occasion and more generic textiles, which could be packed in advance and extended as diplomatic incentives in various contexts. Unlike more generic textile gifts specified in either a diplomatic packing list or in the clauses of treaties, the extant silk in Genoa is singular and its entire design corresponds precisely to the circumstances of the Treaty of Nymphaion.⁴²

³⁸ Johnstone, “Byzantine ‘Pallio,’” 101, proposes that the textile in Genoa relates to church unification, and hence should be dated to 1262, when Michael approached Urban IV on the subject, or 1267, when similar efforts were made with Clement IV.

³⁹ Schreiner, “Zwei Denkmäler,” 253.

⁴⁰ Parma Armani, “Nuove Indagini,” 37, also believes that the textile was sent to Genoa on the basis of the encomium, but points out that it is impossible to determine if any of the textiles specified in the treaty ever reached Genoa in reality.

⁴¹ Falcone, “Il ‘Pallio’ bizantino,” 338. On the generic quality of the textiles specified in the treaty, see Parma Armani, “Nuove Indagini,” 36–7. See also note 42 below.

⁴² Two manuscripts associated with diplomatic ventures clarify the distinction between “custom-made” and “stock” gifts. It is often thought that Michael VIII sent Louis IX a New Testament codex illuminated with full-page portraits of the evangelists. In the margin of the miniature of St Matthew on folio 2v of Coislin 200, an inscription records Michael’s name, thus indicating the codex to be a gift from him. Assuming the inscription is to be trusted, which is not entirely a given, the manuscript exhibits no other visible traces of its function as a gift. It was probably made in advance, not necessarily for any particular diplomatic purpose, and *selected* by the emperor when he found himself in need of a gift to send to France with his envoys. In the early fifteenth century, when Manuel II Palaiologos sought western aid, he too sent a book to France, and this is the subject of Chapter 4. A pre-existing fourteenth-century copy of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite was selected and amended with an author portrait as well as an imperial family portrait and was then sent to the Abbey of Saint-Denis outside Paris. Manuel’s gift therefore involved both recycling and originality. In other words, a stock gift was customized to suit Manuel’s particular diplomatic occasion. Unlike both of these instances, the surviving silk in Genoa associated with the Treaty of Nymphaion as well as the

While the textile in Genoa is unique among surviving Byzantine silks in its sophisticated visual program tailored to its diplomatic context, a similar historiated silk, no longer extant, is attested by a Vatican inventory from 1295.⁴³ Featuring an interweaving of contemporary political and holy figures, this silk was given by Michael VIII Palaiologos to Pope Gregory X. Its imagery too seems to have corresponded to the delicate political context of its exchange. It was given to the Pope in conjunction with the Council of Lyons in 1274, the council at which Michael agreed to the union of the Greek and Latin Churches.⁴⁴ According to the inventory description, the design of this piece reflected the goals of the council, namely, unification. Inscriptions were bilingual (*litteris grecis et latinis*), and in addition to scenes from the life of Christ and the Apostles, it included a scene of Gregory leading the Palaiologan emperor to St Peter. The imagery of the Byzantine Emperor Michael being led to St Peter, as the patron saint of the Roman Church, symbolizes the uniting of the Eastern and Western Churches, the purpose of the diplomatic occasion that prompted its creation.

The Treasury of San Marco in Venice preserves another Byzantine silk, which, though poorly restored in the eighteenth century, may be linked to a *promissio* from the beginning of the thirteenth century (1210) between Michael I of Epiros and Doge Pietro Ziani (Figure 1.2).⁴⁵ On a bright

lost silk associated with the Council of Lyons (to be discussed momentarily) both exhibit unique imagery that must have been specially designed for their particular diplomatic context. On Coislin 200, see Annemarie Weyl Carr, *Byzantine Illumination 1150–1250: The Study of a Provincial Tradition* (Chicago, 1987) (cat. no. 93); and John Lowden, “The Luxury Book as Diplomatic Gift” in Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 256–9, who questions the authenticity of the inscription, claiming it was written by an “unskillful Latin hand.” See also P. Radiciotti, “Episodi di digrafismo grecolatino a Costantinopoli: Giovanni Parastro ed i codici Coislin 200 e Parigino greco 54,” *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, 39 (1996), 185–6 for a different interpretation of the inscription.

⁴³ É. Molinier, *Inventaire du trésor du Saint Siège sous Boniface VIII (1295)* (Paris, 1888), 82–3: “et subtus dictas figuras est imago B. Petri, coram quo est imago domini Gregorii tenentis per manum Palealogum et presentat eum beato Petro reconciliatum, cum litteris grecis et latinis.” This no-longer-extant textile is mentioned by Pauline Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery* (Chicago, 1967), 73, 76–7; Johnstone, “Byzantine ‘Pallio,’” 101; Parma Armani, “Nuove Indagini,” 37; and Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 234.

⁴⁴ The policy of uniting the Western and Eastern Christian Churches was extremely unpopular among Byzantines; more on this in the next chapter. On the ideological implications of the central scene of the silk regarding issues of Church unification, see Johnstone, “Byzantine ‘Pallio,’” 100; and Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 234.

⁴⁵ Two proposals about the dating and historical circumstances of this textile have been put forward. Maria Theodoris, “Sur le Sébastocrator Constantin Comnène Ange et l’endyté du Musée de saint Marc à Venise,” *BZ*, 56 (1963), 273–83; and H. R. Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro di San Marco* (Florence, 1971), 91–7 especially 94–96 (cat. no. 115), propose the identification accepted here, that is, that the Constantine in question is the son of Michael I of Epiros.



Figure 1.2 Embroidered silk of despot and *sebastokrator* Constantine with angels, c. 1210, Treasury of San Marco, Venice

yellow silk ground, which is not the original support,⁴⁶ two archangels labeled Michael and Gabriel stand in full regalia, and in the lower-right corner one may discern the contours of a kneeling figure. All that remains of the disembodied donor is the luxurious textile pattern of his shell-like cloak and the inscription embroidered below the feet of the two archangels, identifying him as “despot Constantine” – that is, the son of Michael I – “Komnenian born, *sebastokrator* of the Angeloi family, descendant of the ruler of the Ausonoi.”⁴⁷ The pact between Epiros and Venice specified cloth for the Italian city’s main church of San Marco and also for the doge.⁴⁸ Although the textile in San Marco is nearly identical in shape (measuring 80 × 240 cm) to the one in Genoa, the formal arrangement remains distinct

Anthony Cutler, “From Loot to Scholarship: Changing Modes in the Italian Response to Byzantine Artifacts, ca. 1200–1750,” *DOP*, 49 (1995), 246–7, follows Theocharis. Conversely, V. Laurent, “Le sébastocrator Constantin Ange et le peplum du musée de Saint-Marc à Venise,” *REB*, 18 (1960), 208–13, followed by A. Guillou, “Inscriptions byzantines d’Italie sur tissu” in *Aetos: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango Presented to Him on April 14, 1998*, edited by I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart, 1998), 172–4, suggests that the protagonist of the inscription is the brother of Emperors Isaac II and Alexis III, thus dating the cloth to the second half of the twelfth century.

⁴⁶ During eighteenth-century restoration efforts, the embroidery was lifted entirely and was reset on a new ground. Because of the textile’s over-zealous restoration, it is useful mainly for its inscription and general composition. Another Byzantine embroidery, an *epitaphios*, was included along with this textile in some of the earliest treasury inventories. See Hahnloser, *Tesoro*, 96–7 (cat. no. 116). It was likewise transferred to a new ground in the eighteenth century.

⁴⁷ Κομνηνοφύης δεσπότης Κωνσταντῖνος σεβαστοκράτωρ Ἀγγελωνύμου γένους ξύναιμος αὐτάνακτος Αὐσονῶν γένους. On the orthographic problems with the inscription, which may be attributed to a later restoration campaign, see Guillou, “Inscriptions byzantines,” 173. On the identification of “Constantine,” see note 45 above.

⁴⁸ Hahnloser, *Tesoro*, 96: “unum pannum honorabile auro textum ad ornatum altaris sancti Marci et aliud unum vobis et successoribus vestris.”

from both the surviving silk in Genoa and the lost Vatican silk. The design of the San Marco textile does not in any obvious manner refer to its diplomatic circumstances.⁴⁹ Conversely, the imagery of the two silks sent by Michael VIII Palaiologos – one associated with the Council of Lyons and the other associated with the Treaty of Nymphaion – both speak to the very particular diplomatic allegiances of their commission.

Andrea Paribeni has reached a conclusion about the relationship of the surviving textile to the Treaty of Nymphaion similar to that of Falcone and has further specified that the two *peploi* described by Holobolos were probably given to the Genoese delegation in July 1261 with the ratification of the treaty.⁵⁰ Following this argument, the extant *peplos* was created in the Empire of Nicaea and was extended as a gift before Michael's Byzantine forces reclaimed Constantinople – that is, between March and July 1261.⁵¹ The *peplos*, in other words, was made for the conclusion of the Treaty of Nymphaion and was not one of the annual cloths specified in the treaty's terms, which should have begun a year later, in 1262, after the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople.⁵² Rather than seeing the silk within a contractual setting of a political pact or as a generic silk that would be appropriate

⁴⁹ It identifies its patron but not its destination. In this regard, it functions like a coin, proclaiming the particular current authority of its source to an undifferentiated audience.

⁵⁰ Paribeni, "Il pallio di San Lorenzo," 232.

⁵¹ Schreiner was first to suggest that the textile was made in Nicaea, not Constantinople, a conclusion corroborated by art historical evidence offered by Falcone and Paribeni independently of each other. From the perspective of silk production in and around the Empire of Nicaea, such an attribution is also likely. We know, for example, that in order to promote indigenous silk production, Nicene Emperor John III Vatatzes prohibited wearing imported silk. See Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Interaction," 220; and Jacoby, "Genoa, Silk Trade and Silk Manufacture," 24. The Genoese, Jacoby claims, purchased raw silk from Byzantine and Turkish Asia Minor during the second half of the thirteenth century, but not silks of Nicaean manufacture due to a diminished quality, preferring silk worked in Lucca. Indicative of this is the very textile in Genoa under investigation here, about which he writes: "instead of being woven into the cloth, its decoration was embroidered with gold and silk threads on plain samite, a device that substantially reduced manufacturing costs." Moreover, in "The Production of Silk Textiles in Latin Greece" in *Technology in Latin-Occupied Greece* (Athens, 2000) [repr. *Commercial Exchange Across the Mediterranean*, XII], 25, Jacoby points out that after 1204, the Latin emperors of Constantinople and the Greek rulers of Nicaea and Epiros produced silk dyed with cheaper purple colorants as alternatives to the murex of earlier times. After the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople, the Genoese continued to barter with silks obtained from Nicaea in addition to Italian textiles. See Dennis Deletant, "Genoese, Tatars and Rumanians at the Mouth of the Danube in the Fourteenth Century," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 62(4) (1984), 515.

⁵² The possibility still remains that the textile was created and extended to the Genoese sometime between March 1261 (when the initial negotiations took place) and December 1265 (the delivery of Holobolos's oration). But the argument advanced here is that the imagery of the silk itself provides compelling evidence of its date and association with the particular diplomatic context of the Treaty of Nymphaion. Paired with the textual sources, the overall design of the

in multiple contexts, the bestowal of the *peplos* should be understood as part of a ceremonial conclusion of the particular treaty – not a single surviving piece from among a series of anonymous fabrics stipulated in most diplomatic pacts of the time, but rather a singular, custom-made work whose extension as a gift was integral to the performance of imperial ideology. Holobolos’s panegyric discloses precisely this role for the silk he discussed. While the oration offers textual corroboration for the extant textile, allowing us to situate it securely within the diplomatic context of the Treaty of Nymphaion, the encomium is also illuminating for what it reveals about the status of the image of the emperor, and specifically a silken image, as a diplomatic gift. In other words, Holobolos’s speech provides more than documentary evidence; the verbal encomium provides the rhetorical tools best suited to interpret the visual encomium – the embroidered textile.

Immediately before describing the two *peploi* given to the Genoese ambassadors, Holobolos recounts their speech delivered to the emperor. The fictive words of the Italian ambassadors underscore their complete and total submission to the emperor: the Genoese claim to have subjected themselves entirely to the Byzantine ruler, abandoning democracy for the emperor’s authority, hailing him not only as helmsman but as monarch and king. Holobolos claims that they requested an image of Michael as a visible expression of protection and love for their city: “Soothe the piercing love of this [city], through your image [σοῦ χαρακτήρος] rendered on a cloth: for the form of the beloved is a great remedy [φάρμακον] for lovers. It will be a strong defense against our enemies, an averter [ἀποτρόπαιον] against every plot, a powerful parapet for the city [Genoa] which is yours and ours, a strong tower and an adamant wall to face the enemy.”⁵³ The act of submission is followed by the bestowal of an imperial image; the image signals allegiance and protection. As already noted, by describing the image as a *pharmakon* and an *apotropaion*, it is associated with the efficacy of icons, amulets, and the double-edged nature of a gift.⁵⁴

This evocative description of the power of the image of the emperor is cast in the voice of the foreign ambassadors. It is, in other words, delivered

piece suggests a date on the eve of the 1261 Byzantine restoration of Constantinople, and thus must have been made within the Empire of Nicaea.

⁵³ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:46.27–34; and Siderides, “Μανουήλ Ὁλοβώλου,” 188: δὸς ὡς δυνατὸν σεαυτὸν τῇ σῇ πόλει καὶ ἡμετέρα, παρηγόρησον διὰ τοῦ σοῦ χαρακτήρος πέπλῳ καὶ γραφαῖς ἐγκειμένου τὸν ταύτης διαπρύσιον ἔρωτα· μέγα τοῖς ἐρῶσι φάρμακον καὶ γεγραμμένον τὸ τοῦ ἐρωμένου πέφυκε μόρφωμα· δύναται σου καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν, ἂν ἡμῖν παρεῖν, πολλὰ· ἀμυντήριον ἔσται κατὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀντιπάλων στερρόν, πάσης ἐπιβουλῆς ἀποτρόπαιον, ἔπαλξις τῇ σῇ καὶ ἡμετέρα πόλει κρατερὰ, προσπύργιον ἰσχυρὸν καὶ τεῖχος ἀντικρυς ἀδαμάντινον.

⁵⁴ See the discussion in the Introduction.

as a speech within a speech, after which the text returns to the orator's own voice for a description of the textile gifts – the *peploi*. The context for this passage in particular and the delivery of Holobolos's panegyric in general is also relevant. Imperial orations and encomia were part of Michael's concentrated effort to foster an "annual cycle of court ceremonial."⁵⁵ The *prokypsis* ceremony in particular became a "regularly staged ceremony" under him.⁵⁶ This ritualized imperial epiphany began under the Komnenoi, but continued through the Nicaean period to find its fullest expression under the Palaiologoi. In this still-life ceremony, the imperial family ascended a platform (from which the ceremony takes its name) that was closed off from view by a curtain until the appropriate moment – signaled by lights and sound – when it was drawn to reveal momentarily the framed immobile imperial bodies, and then closed again.⁵⁷ Holobolos wrote at least twenty poems to accompany the *prokypsis* ceremony, most of which date to Michael's rule.⁵⁸ The emphasis on the potency of the imperial image in Holobolos's encomium, therefore, was part of a much larger ceremonial context of self-reflexive imperial oratory, which showcased the epiphanic power of the image of the emperor.

Although the *prokypsis* ceremony developed in the twelfth century, it is best known in the Palaiologan period – surviving texts are almost all from the later Byzantine era. The relationship of early Palaiologan ceremonies to Komnenian precedents suggests something of the logic underlying the Holobolos text and the textile in Genoa. Part of the evidence for the 1265–1266–1267 dating of the imperial orations hinges upon Holobolos's title ῥήτωρ τῶν ῥητόρων, which signals the orator's appointment to the post of rhetor, a promotion that has been read as part of the emperor's larger agenda of renewal, related to his need for legitimation. Michael, after all, was essentially a usurper. He had been crowned co-emperor in Nicaea in 1259 after swearing publicly to refrain from conspiring against his junior and legitimate partner, John IV Laskaris.⁵⁹ But on Christmas Day 1261,

⁵⁵ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 47, calls attention to Michael's efforts to foster court ceremonial.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁷ On the *prokypsis* ceremony, see Michael McCormick, "Prokypsis," *ODB*; A. Heisenberg, *Aus der Geschichte und der Literatur der Palaiologenzeit* (Munich, 1920), 85–97; E. Jeffreys, "The Comnenian Prokypsis," *Parergon*, 5 (1987), 38–53; O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser*, 112–18; E. H. Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti, lever du roi," *DOP*, 17 (1963), 159–62; and Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 29–77 and 41–2 on the *prokypsis* in Nicaea.

⁵⁸ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 69.

⁵⁹ On the legacy of these events, see Teresa Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor: Politics of Resistance after the Palaiologan Usurpation," *BSI*, 66 (2008), 203–27. I thank Sarah Brooks for first bringing this reference to my attention.

after the reconquest of Constantinople, Michael ordered the blinding and exile of his young co-emperor and was crowned again in Hagia Sophia. This secured Palaiologan rule in a newly restored Byzantine Empire and it also incited the rage of Patriarch Arsenios, who promptly excommunicated the emperor. Manuel Holobolos too voiced objections to the blinding of John IV, and after having his nose and lips slit, he retired from court life to the Prodromos monastery under the name Maximos. Arsenios refused to lift the anathema and eventually banned the emperor from entering the Great Church altogether. The animosity between emperor and patriarch having escalated to this level, Michael had Arsenios deposed, banished, and excommunicated in 1265.⁶⁰ Arsenios was then succeeded by Germanos III (1265–6), during whose patriarchate Holobolos returned to court and composed the imperial orations.

Ruth Macrides has suggested that Germanos III was responsible for the orator's promotion to the post of rhetor and has stressed that his appointment should be read within the context of revival at this time.⁶¹ Indeed, Holobolos's encomium emphasizes the renewal of ancient and venerable but obsolete customs, such as the annual ceremony in which tribute is offered to the emperor, including a *peplos* woven with scenes of the ruler's achievements for that year.⁶² Here we see a slippage between visual and verbal forms of imperial tribute. Holobolos claims to know the appropriate iconographies for such *peploi* from other authors, not from actual textiles. Thus, the textual *ekphrasis* of the material gift is an essential component of the imperial encomia, which themselves are conceptualized as gifts or tributes to the emperor. Holobolos refers to one of his *logoi* explicitly as "annual tribute."⁶³ His gift is his rhetorical invocation of the emperor's

⁶⁰ These events will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

⁶¹ Macrides, "The New Constantine," 26–8. In "Byzantine Imperial Panegyric as Advice Literature (1204–c. 1350)" in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001* (Aldershot, 2003), 56–7, and Dimitar Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 38, reminds us that the position of rhetor had lapsed during the Laskarid period and was revived by Michael VIII in 1265, and with it the renewal of the annual imperial panegyric, which were delivered at Christmas rather than Epiphany as they traditionally had been under the Komnenoi. See also Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, 50–3.

⁶² Macrides, "The New Constantine," 28.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18 and n. 25, 30 and n. 92. Authors such as Theophylaktos of Ochrid and Nikephoros Blemmydes describe their own *logoi* as gifts, which fulfill the function of annual imperial tribute according to Macrides (*ibid.*, 28–9). The tribute therefore functions on multiple levels: the visual representations themselves (the textiles), their afterlife in oral performance, and their textual recording.

textile gifts.⁶⁴ Significantly, Holobolos concludes his description of the second *peplos* given to the Genoese ambassadors by comparing it to the great ancient *peplos* woven for Athena as part of the Panathenaia: the brightly dyed *peplos* woven by the Athenians for their “civic patron Pallas” featured an elaborate gigantomachy with cloud-gathering Zeus hurling thunderbolts and Athena fighting at his side.⁶⁵

With a classical allusion entirely in the spirit of the literati of his day, Holobolos contrasts the trials and tortures of Christian martyrs with the ancient prototype of civic tribute, a woven gift for the ancient goddess of Athens. Not surprisingly, Michael’s gift is deemed superior to the ancient counterpart, but both *peploi* are woven with myths and hagiographies and both constitute tribute to their ruler: Athena as sacred patron and protector of Athens and Michael as beloved emperor and protector of both Byzantine and Genoese cities.

Weaving allegiances: hagiographic and imperial largesse

Holobolos’s encomium praises imperial generosity through an extended *ekphrasis* on the *peploi* that were given to the Genoese ambassadors. The orator represents the Genoese as completely submissive to the emperor’s power and ardent in their desire for a likeness of the emperor; again, it would be their remedy (φάρμακον) and protector or averter (ἀποτρόπαιον). Despite the emphasis placed on the emperor’s image in his verbal tribute, its power to protect and sate the foreign ambassadors’ desire, the orator neglects to mention the imperial effigy at the very center of the *peplos* (Figure 1.3).⁶⁶ The central scene on the upper register of the textile unmistakably depicts

⁶⁴ Tantalizingly, Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 41, has suggested that because of the emphasis on textiles in the first encomium, it may have been intended to accompany the installation of the *peplos* that Germanos commissioned for Hagia Sophia in 1265 that depicted Michael as the “New Constantine.” Along with the *peplos* depicting the Patriarchs Germanoi, the New Constantine silk was later altered in an act of *damnatio memoriae*. See Titos Papamastorakis, “Tampering with History: From Michael III to Michael VIII,” *BZ*, 96(1) (2003), 207–9. For more on this, see Chapter 2.

⁶⁵ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:47.25–31; and Siderides, “Μανουήλ Ὁλοβόλου,” 189: τί πρὸς τοῦτο τὸ ἔργον ὁ πέπλος ἐκεῖνος, ὃν ἱστούργουν Ἀθηναῖοι τῇ πολιადὶ τούτων Παλλάδι καὶ τέχνῃ ποικιλικῇ λαμπροῖς ἐφάρμασσον βάμμασιν, ᾧ μῦθοί τινες καὶ τερατεῖαι ἱστούργητο, γίγαντες βάλλοντες λίθους. εἰς οὐρανὸν καὶ βαλλόμενοι· Ζεὺς ὁ νεφεληγερέτης καὶ τερπικέραυνος κεραυνοβολῶν καὶ πληγὰς εἰσδεχόμενος· Ἀθηνᾶ τῷ πατρὶ συμμαχοῦσα καὶ μεγάλα κατὰ γιγάντων αἰρούσα τρόπαια.

⁶⁶ Again, Holobolos specifies two textiles: one with the emperor’s image and another with the life of St Lawrence and associated martyrs.

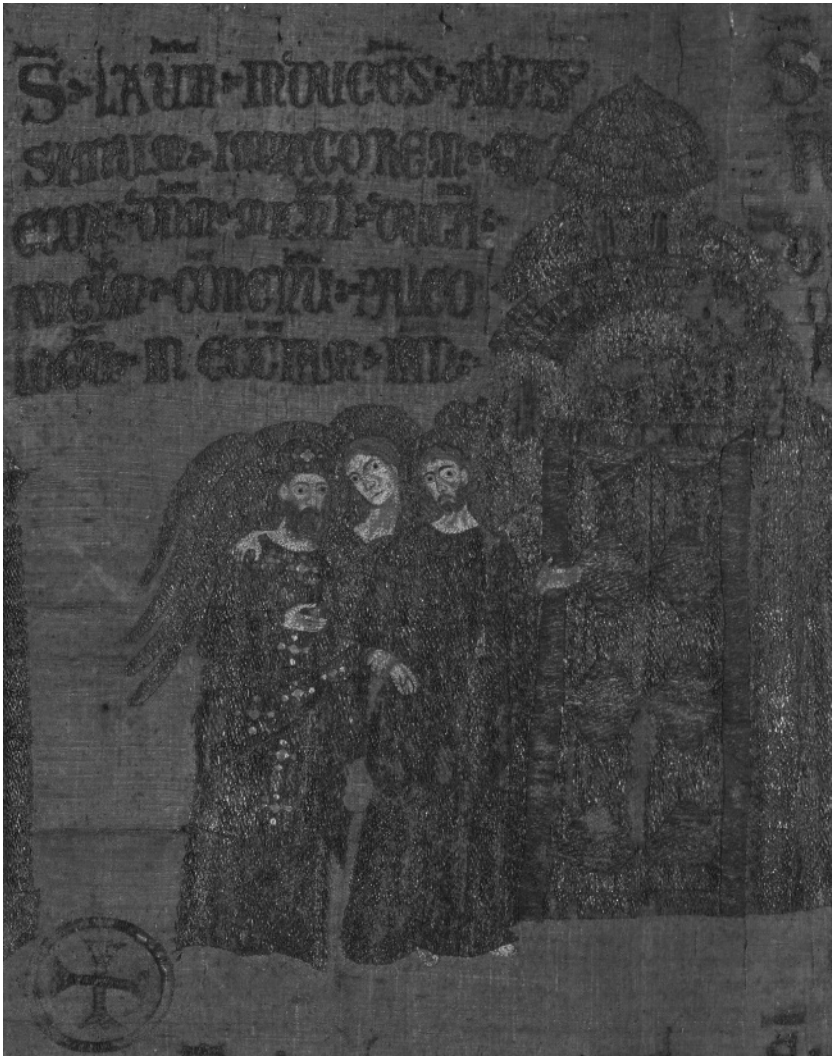


Figure 1.3 Detail of the upper register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 5, Byzantine emperor with the archangel and St Lawrence

Michael being led to the church of Genoa by St Lawrence, the patron of the church and supposed protagonist of the hagiographic narrative.⁶⁷ Despite its central position on the silk, the imperial image is embedded within the detailed hagiographic cycle, rendered in the same scale, and not separated

⁶⁷ The Latin inscription, addressed at greater length below, precludes any ambiguity about the identity of the figures. Given the prominence of this central scene, the encomium's omission of the Byzantine emperor's portrait is particularly curious and will be discussed further below.

by a framing device from the rest of the visual narrative.⁶⁸ The setting of this sacro-imperial encounter, the architectural edifice identified as the church of Genoa, and hence the intended repository of the textile, is the largest formal element, but the triad of figures at the threshold of the building are of similar scale and are on the same ground line as the actors of the hagiographic drama surrounding the central scene. Yet previous scholars, with the exception of Andrea Paribeni, have stressed the “autonomous function” of the contemporary imperial scene.⁶⁹ For Falcone, it is detached from the other saintly scenes, while Johnstone has described it as an “irrelevant” interruption of the hagiographic narrative.⁷⁰ This position merits further consideration, for although the inclusion of the emperor’s image complicated the designers’ ability to create a legible hagiographic narrative, as we will see momentarily, the addition of the emperor in the central scene imbues the silk with precisely the sense of self-referentiality that permeates Byzantine panegyric. Michael being led to the cathedral of the saint whose martyrdom surrounds the image may be read as a symbol of alliance, a pictorialization of the pact between the two parties, and at the same time a strong assertion of Byzantine imperial ideology. Following an overview of the hagiographic cycle and imperial scene at its center, I will consider how their combination articulates a unique image of imperial largesse designed for its particular diplomatic occasion.

Holobolos designates the *peplos* given to the Genoese ambassadors as a book rather than a cloth.⁷¹ This rhetorical characterization is apt in many ways, as the surviving textile in Genoa exhibits many pictorial conventions found commonly in illuminated manuscripts. In particular, it employs continuous narration, where figures are repeated to suggest the unfolding of events in time. On the upper register the individual scenes are separated into two groups on either side of the central image, that of the Byzantine emperor with the archangel and St Lawrence, and on the lower register they read continuously from the left to the right edge of the cloth. The inclusion of the extra-hagiographic imperial scene constrained the designers’ ability

⁶⁸ In its lack of formal divisions between scenes, the format of the textile differs from iconostases such as the epistyle with the Miracles of Saint Eustratios, on which see the entry by Nancy Ševčenko in Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins (eds.), *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai* (Los Angeles, 2006), 174–6 (cat. no. 21), and the elaborate cycle of frescoes in the church of St Euphemia, to which the silk in Genoa is often compared. See Hans Naumann and Rudolf Belting, *Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom zu Istanbul und ihre Fresken* (Berlin, 1966), 150–1.

⁶⁹ Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 233–4.

⁷⁰ Falcone, “Il ‘Pallio’ bizantino,” 339; and Johnstone, “Byzantine ‘Pallio,’” 106.

⁷¹ See note 33 above.



Figure 1.4 Detail of the upper register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 6, Sixtus commanding Lawrence to distribute church vessels

to adapt the pictorial source material, which affected the sequencing of the scenes on the upper register. As a result, these scenes follow an unusual sequence: the story begins on the upper register with the five scenes on the right (along with the rightmost scene on the lower register) and then continues with the four scenes on the upper left. At the chronological beginning (scene 6, directly to the right of the Genoese church), as the inscription makes clear, Sixtus commands Lawrence to distribute the belongings of the church (Figure 1.4).⁷² Lawrence fulfills Sixtus's orders in the next two scenes to the right (scenes seven and eight): he sells the church belongings and then he distributes the money from the sale to the poor (Figure 1.5).⁷³ In the last

⁷² Pope Sixtus had made Lawrence archdeacon and then, before being imprisoned by Roman authorities, he entrusted the church treasures to Lawrence with the instructions to sell them and distribute the proceeds to the needy. The inscriptions are given by Siderides in "Πέπλος," 376–8 (where there are a few errors); Parma Armani, "Nuove Indagini," 42; and Falcone, "Il 'Pallio' bizantino," 343 n. 2. Scene 6 (upper register): S(anctus) XISTUS EP(i)S(copus) ROME / P(re)CIPIEN(s) S(anc)TO LAUR(entio) ARCHID(IAC(ono) DISPENSARE VASA / ECCLE(sie).

⁷³ Scene 7: S(anctus) LAUR(entius) / VENUNDA(n)S / VASA EC/CLESIE. Scene 8: S(anctus) LAURENT(ius) P(e)CU(niam) VASO(rum) / Q(ue) VENDIDIT DISP(ers)RGENS PAU/PERIBUS.

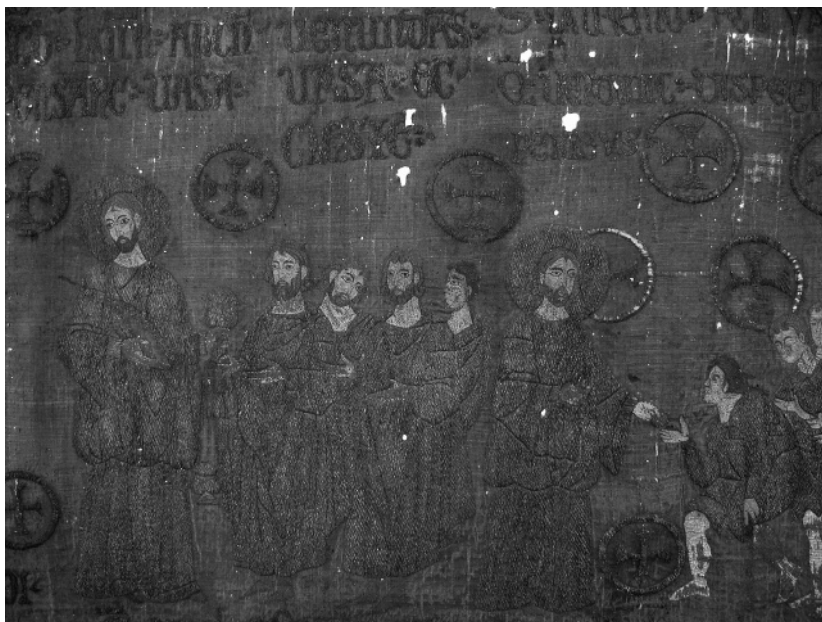


Figure 1.5 Detail of the upper register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 7, Lawrence selling church vessels, and scene 8, Lawrence distributing money to the needy

two scenes on the upper register (scenes 9 and 10) we are shown Sixtus's fate: he argues with Emperor Decius and then is decapitated (Figure 1.6).⁷⁴ His burial is depicted on the scene directly below this (scene 20, the farthest scene on the lower right), so that the designers of the textile could accommodate the contemporary imperial scene at the center of the upper register. The narrative continues on the far left of the cloth with the first scene, where Lawrence argues with Decius about what he had sold (Figure 1.7).⁷⁵ This scene mirrors that of Sixtus before the emperor (scene 9) both thematically and pictorially: both are scenes of confrontation in which the martyrs stand accused before the enthroned emperor debating the ramifications of their actions. The Roman emperor demanded the return of the church treasures that Lawrence had sold within three days. In that time Lawrence gathered together the poor of the city and presented them to the emperor, saying: "Behold the treasures of Christ's church." The textile conveys this in an

⁷⁴ Scene 9: S(anctus) XISTUS DISPUTANS IM/PERATORI DECIO. Scene 10: S(anctus) XISTUS GLADIO CA/PITE AMPUTATUS.

⁷⁵ Scene 1: S(anctus) LAURENTI(us) DISPUTAN(s) IMPERA/TORI DECIO DE VASIS QUE / VENDIDIT.



Figure 1.6 Detail of the upper register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), continuation of scene 8, scene 9, Sixtus before Decius, and scene 10, beheading of Sixtus



Figure 1.7 Detail of the upper register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 1, Lawrence before Decius, and detail of scene 2, Lawrence presenting to Decius the blind and the lame

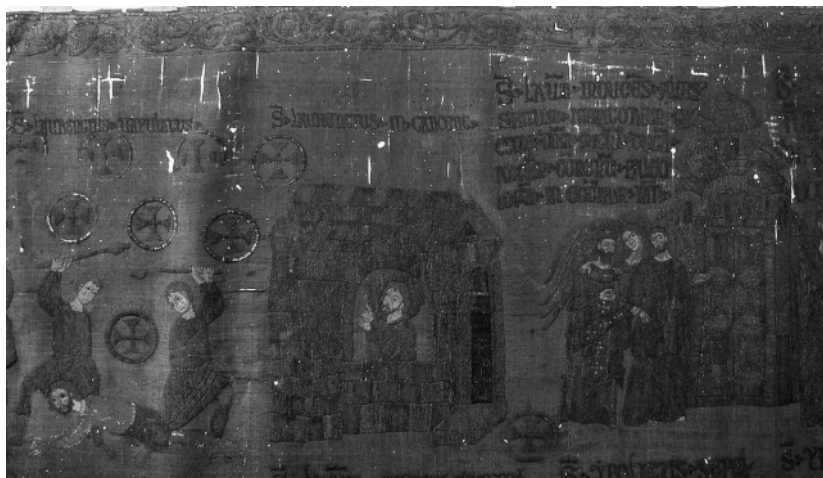


Figure 1.8 Detail of the upper register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 3, Lawrence being beaten, scene 4, Lawrence imprisoned, and scene 5, Byzantine emperor with the archangel and St Lawrence

abbreviated manner. In scene 2 Lawrence stands next to an ox-driven cart filled with people in simple tunics and the inscription verifies that indeed the martyr has brought the blind and the lame to the emperor.⁷⁶ As a result of this, he was beaten, which is depicted in the next scene (scene 3), and then imprisoned, as is seen in the next scene (scene 4) (Figure 1.8).⁷⁷ Thus, the visual narrative on the upper register is structured into two segments surrounding the central scene whose inclusion necessitated a shifting of Sixtus's burial to the lower register.

The narrative continues on the lower register, where it reads continuously from left to right in sequential order for the entire length of the silk (until the final scene of Sixtus's burial, that is). In the first scene on the lower left (scene 11) Lawrence is shown imprisoned and caring for the sick. This is made clear not only by the inscription but also by the architecture, which repeats the setting of the prison from scene 4 (Figure 1.9).⁷⁸ A scene of conversion follows in the twelfth and thirteenth scenes. The jailer, identified by the inscription as Tiburtius Callinicus, is depicted prostrate before the

⁷⁶ Scene 2: S(anctus) LAUR(entius) QUI OPPEREBAT VEICULIS / CLAUDOS ET CECOS QUIBUS DISP(o)SIT / PRECIUM VASORUM AD IMPERATOREM.

⁷⁷ Scene 3: S(anctus) LAURENTI(u)S VAPULATUS. Scene 4: S(anctus) LAURENTIUS IN CARCERE.

⁷⁸ Scene 11: S(anctus) LAUR(entius) CURANS IN CARCERE / OM(ne)S INFIRMOS AD EU(m) VENIE(n)TES.



Figure 1.9 Detail of the lower register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 11, Lawrence caring for the needy, and scene 12, Lawrence converting Tiburtius Callinicus

imprisoned Lawrence,⁷⁹ and in the next scene, he is baptized by the saint (Figure 1.10).⁸⁰ The fourteenth scene represents Lawrence's martyrdom on a bed of coals and the fifteenth and central scene on the lower register depicts his burial by fellow martyr Hippolytus.⁸¹ The remaining scenes, to the right of Lawrence's burial, concern Hippolytus. As a result of performing the Christian burial for Lawrence, Hippolytus is shown before Decius in scene 16 (as both Sixtus and Lawrence had been earlier). He is then tortured by laceration with metal hooks in scene 17, is dragged by wild horses in scene 18, and is finally buried in scene 19 (Figure 1.11).⁸² Therefore, the two scenes at the end of the silk depict the separate burials of Hippolytus in scene 19 and of Sixtus in scene 20 (Figure 1.12).⁸³

⁷⁹ Scene 12: TIBURCIUS CALINICUS PRE(ce)PTOR / CARCERIS CREDENS IN CR(ist)O.

⁸⁰ Scene 13: S(anctus) LAURENTIUS BAPTISANS / TIBURCIUM CALINICUS.

⁸¹ Scene 14: S(anctus) LAUR(entius) SARTAGINIBUS / IGNIS EXCENSI DEO SP(iritu)M / COM(m)ENDANS. Scene 15: S(anctus) YPOLITUS SEPEL/LIENS S(an)C(tu)M LAURENTIUM.

⁸² Scene 16: S(anctus) YPOLIT(us) DI/SPUTANS IMPE/RATORI DECIO. Scene 17: S(anctus) YPOLIT(us) UNGUIBUS / ENEIS LACERATUS. Scene 18: S(anctus) YPOLITUS P(er) EQUOS / FEROCES TRACTUS. Scene 19: S(anctus) YPOLITUS / SEPULTUS.

⁸³ Scene 20: S(anctus) XIST(us) / SEPULTUS.

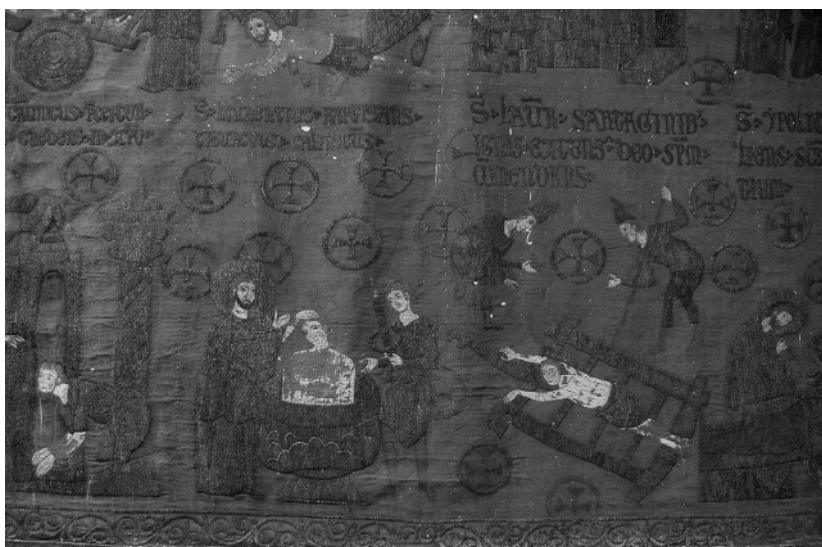


Figure 1.10 Detail of the lower register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 13, Lawrence baptizing Tiburtius Callinicus, and scene 14, Martyrdom of Lawrence

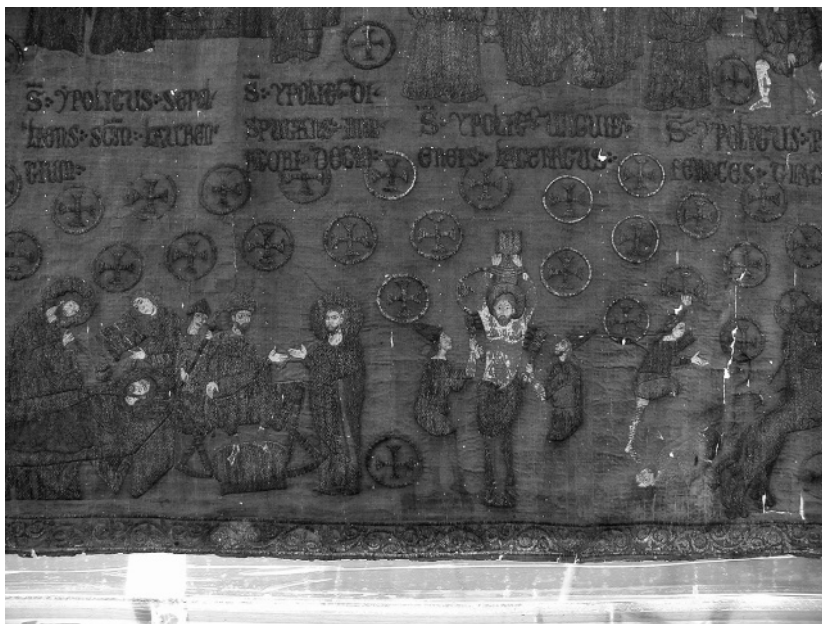


Figure 1.11 Detail of the lower register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 15, burial of Lawrence, scene 16, Hippolytus before Decius, and scene 17, Hippolytus lacerated by hooks, and scene 18, Hippolytus dragged by horses



Figure 1.12 Detail of the lower register of the Byzantine silk in Genoa (Figure 1.1), scene 19, burial of Hippolytus, and scene 20, burial of Sixtus

Regardless of the diverse pictorial and iconographic sources for the design, which are treated by Paribeni and Falcone,⁸⁴ the silk in Genoa draws on typical Palaiologan embroidery traditions and thus offers a crucial link between pre- and post-conquest textiles – this despite the fact that it remains unique with respect to other extant Byzantine embroideries, which are almost entirely liturgical in function and imagery.⁸⁵ Perhaps the earliest surviving Byzantine embroideries are a pair of aeres in Halberstadt Cathedral from the late twelfth century associated with Michael VIII's maternal grandfather, Alexios Palaiologos, that represent the Communion of the Apostles,

⁸⁴ While Lawrence is included in the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople, compiled in the late tenth century, the iconography of this saint is extremely rare in Byzantine art. But both Falcone and Paribeni have introduced extensive comparanda in different media to situate the piece within more contemporary artistic trends. See more full discussion in Hilsdale, "Imperial Image," 174–9. See also the helpful appendix of Toth, "Narrative Fabric," 109, which coordinates the iconography with the text from the synaxary.

⁸⁵ Within the corpus of later Byzantine embroideries, the imagery in general relates to the liturgical function in a fairly straightforward manner, as, for example, the Communion of the Apostles appears most commonly on aeres, the veils used to cover the chalice. See Warren Woodfin in *BFP*, 295–6. A similar argument may be advanced for the textile in Genoa. My reading of the ideological message of the iconography of the silk relates directly to its function as a diplomatic gift. The imagery, it will be seen, underscores imperial generosity in a manner that echoes the concerns of the diplomatic exchange in which it was extended. Thus, form and function in this instance too are intimately related.



Figure 1.13 Communion of the Apostles,
the first of a pair of aeres, 1185–95,
Cathedral Treasury, Halberstadt, Germany



Figure 1.14 Communion of the Apostles,
the second of a pair of aeres, 1185–95,
Cathedral Treasury, Halberstadt, Germany

the iconography found most frequently on such chalice veils (Figures 1.13–1.14).⁸⁶ Scene 8 on the silk in Genoa, where Lawrence holds out the

⁸⁶ They date to 1185–95 and were brought from Constantinople to Halberstadt in 1205, after the Fourth Crusade. See F. Dölger, “Die zwei byzantinischen ‘Fahnen’ im Halberstädter



Figure 1.15 Anastasis *epigonation*, fourteenth century, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (T. 714)

church property, resembles this configuration of Christ as priest offering the chalice.⁸⁷ The decorative features of the *peplos* are also very well situated within later Byzantine embroidery traditions. The cross-in-circle motif scattered throughout the Genoese textile has been described as the “hallmark” of Byzantine church embroidery.⁸⁸ An *epigonation* depicting the Anastasis in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens assigned to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century represents this motif well (Figure 1.15).⁸⁹

Domschatz,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, 3(2) (1935), 1351–60; Johnstone, *Byzantine Tradition*, 87 and 88; and, again, Woodfin, *BFP*, 295–6.

⁸⁷ The same program of the Communion of the Apostles is found on a fourteenth-century pair in the Collegiate Church of Castell’Arquato and on a single aer in the Benaki Museum in Athens. The Collegiate Church of Castell’Arquato examples may be found in Johnstone, *Byzantine Tradition*, nos. 87 and 88; Gabriel Millet, *Broderies religieuses de style byzantin* (Paris, 1939–41), 72–3 and plates CLIV–CLV; and Giovanni Morello, *Splendori di Bisanzio* (Milan, 1990), 204–5, where they are reproduced in color. For the Benaki piece, see Johnstone, *Byzantine Tradition*, no. 89; and Helen C. Evans, *BFP*, 310–11 (cat. no. 186).

⁸⁸ Johnstone, “Byzantine ‘Pallio,’” 102.

⁸⁹ *BFP*, 304–5 (cat. no. 180). Here, as in the Genoese silk, the stamplike circle-crosses are cut off by the embroidered figural imagery in many places. The epitaphios in the National Historical

Although the textile in Genoa participates in the late Byzantine embroidery tradition by virtue of the scattered cross-in-circle motif, it differs in terms of technique, where we see a contrast between the embroidery of the inscription and the figural imagery. For the figures, the work follows typical Byzantine embroidery customs by using couched metal thread for every aspect of the design, save the flesh parts, which are worked in silk.⁹⁰ Yet the inscriptions mark a significant departure: unlike typical Byzantine inscriptions, where thread is laid horizontally across the strokes of the letters, in this instance the thread follows their contours.⁹¹ In this way the inscriptions, beyond the obvious fact that they are Latin rather than Greek, differ from other Byzantine textiles. Moreover, the inscriptions appear to have been embroidered after the main figural imagery. The letter scale changes from scene to scene in order to accommodate the amount of space allotted by the imagery, in some instances less successfully than others. In the central scene on the upper register, for example, the letters conform to the shape of the church domes, while the inscriptions of the two scenes in the lower-right corner are awkwardly spaced both with regard to each other and their corresponding imagery. In all probability the inscriptions were executed by a western-trained artist, a position originally put forth by Johnstone and followed by subsequent scholars. Again, the design draws on well-established embroidery techniques and pictorial conventions found in other media, but also exhibits particularities that are highly unusual. The most significant idiosyncrasy, to which we now turn, is the configuration of the central scene, the contemporary imperial image that is both integrated within and interrupts the hagiographic narrative.

Museum of Sofia, which includes an inscription naming Michael VIII's son Andronikos II Palaiologos, includes the cross-in-circle design as well, but in a more regularized pattern. See *BFP*, 314–15 (cat. no. 188). The delicate foliate pattern forms a single frame along the outer edge of the silk in Genoa that also finds parallels in extant Palaiologan textiles. The Athens *epigonation* employs a similar vine rinceaux frame (although much abraded). It also appears on the fourteenth-century Vatican *sakkos*, a liturgical vestment entirely different in most respects from the Genoese textile, but bearing important similarities in its embroidery motifs. See *BFP*, 300–1 (cat. no. 177). Like the Genoese textile and the Athens *epigonation*, the surface of the *sakkos* appears to be scattered almost randomly with the cross-in-circle motif, and the pattern of the lower hem area – delicate tendrils encircling crosses set within a thin foliate frame – closely resembles the Genoese silk's rinceaux pattern.

⁹⁰ Johnstone has handled the technical aspects of the textile's production and Parma Armani, "Nuove Indagini," 31, offers a thorough summary of its condition. The silk underwent a significant restoration campaign in 1948–50, but little documentation of this survives. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (see note 3), the textile is currently undergoing a thorough conservation campaign in Florence.

⁹¹ Johnstone, "Byzantine 'Pallio,'" 102; and Paribeni "Il pallio di San Lorenzo," 235, with further thoughts on the script itself.

The emperor, archangel, and saint at the doors of Genoa's church

Initially, the design of the silk appears to meld two entirely separate and distinct genres: a hagiographic story told in linear sequence and a single symbolic imperial event, a potential church entrance.⁹² The emperor's image substitutes for the historic event for which the textile was created – the diplomatic treaty that was conducted in the hopes of regaining the occupied Byzantine capital (Figure 1.3). The privileged central position of this scene and its placement along the vertical axis directly above St Lawrence's burial mark it formally as the pivotal episode. The church is the largest formal element on the textile and the apex of its dome extends to the upper frame of the textile.

The lengthy inscription, which follows the contours of the architecture, identifies the figures, action, and setting of this pivotal scene: "Saint Lawrence leads the Most High Emperor of the Greeks Lord Michael Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos into the church of Genoa."⁹³ Each of the figures is distinguished by a halo. St Lawrence stands closest to the doors of the church. He gestures toward the church's doors with one hand and with the other he clasps the wrist of the imperial figure on the left – he leads, as the inscription states. The emperor is recognizable by a gemmed crown and *loros*, which according to Byzantine custom wraps around his body and over his left arm, the arm by which he is being led by the saint. The bulk of the inscription elaborates the emperor's nomenclature, highlighting the illustrious families from which he claimed descent. This is not unusual, but it is highly unusual, even unprecedented, for a Byzantine inscription to

⁹² In the central scene on the upper register, the emperor, archangel, and saint stand at the threshold of the church of Genoa and gesture toward its closed doors. The emperor, of course, never physically set foot on Genoese soil and hence never entered the church of San Lorenzo. In this sense, the image is analogous to the sixth-century mosaic cycle in the sanctuary of San Vitale in Ravenna, where the celebrated portraits of Justinian and Theodora visually stand in for the imperial couple in the church's liturgical celebration. In both instances, the imperial image acts as a surrogate for the person portrayed and, further, it constitutes the organizing principle for the larger iconographic program. At San Vitale, the theme of gift-giving, the chalice carried by Theodora and the paten by Justinian, ties together the broader narrative of sacrifice and offering elaborated in the larger iconographic program of the ritual space. On the silk in Genoa, giving also governs the overall design.

⁹³ Scene 5 (upper register): S(anctus) LAU(rentius) INDUCE(n)S ALTIS/SIMUM IMP(er)ATOREM GRE/CO(rum) D(omi)N(u)M MICH(ae)L(em) DUCA(m) / ANG(e)L(u)M CO(m)NENU(m) PALEO/LOGU(m) IN ECC(les)IAM IAN(uensem or uae or uensium).

invoke the Greek emperor (*Imperator Grecorum*) rather than the (Byzantine) standard Emperor of the Romans (ὁ βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων). Moreover, while the inscription names only two figures – the saintly and the imperial – a third is portrayed: the archangel, beardless, unlike the other two figures, standing behind and between Lawrence and Michael, his hand visible on the emperor's right shoulder and his wings extending beyond the emperor, framing him.⁹⁴

Another ambiguity involves the depiction of the sacred space. The inscription leaves no doubt about the identity of the structure, but its depiction is much more in keeping with Byzantine than Italian traditions. That the designers of the cloth rendered the Italian church according to Byzantine architectural conventions with which they were familiar seems logical. They would not have been expected to know the distinctive striped façade of the Romanesque basilica of San Lorenzo, and, after all, in Nicaea inspiration could be drawn from Byzantine churches, including a number of thirteenth-century structures that are praised in *ekphraseis*.⁹⁵ But given the unprecedented configuration of the textile's design, it is worth lingering on the setting of this scene before pursuing the action taking place at its doors, which constitutes a wholly original visualization of imperial intercession.

By contrast with the other architectural edifice represented on the textile – the prison with its pitched roof and triangular pediment, directly to the left of the central scene (in scene 4) and in the lower left two episodes (in scenes 11 and 12) – the church at the center of the textile resembles a centrally planned Byzantine sacred structure.⁹⁶ The building is arranged to

⁹⁴ While Parma Armani, "Nuove Indagini," 37, qualified the identification of the archangel as Michael with a question mark, there is no doubt about the identity of the figure, despite the fact that he is not named explicitly in the inscription. The Emperor Michael and his eponymous archangel appear together on the most significant artistic commissions of the day: the lost bronze monument erected in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles and on his coinage (see discussion in Chapters 2 and 3). Curiously, the archangel, situated perfectly between and behind the two figures, is present in upper body alone. This is evident especially when examining the reverse of the textile, where a third pair of feet and lower garb is missing. On the issues at stake in the representation of angels, see Glenn Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley, 2001).

⁹⁵ Hans Buchwald, "Lascarid Architecture," *JÖB*, 28 (1979), 261–96; Clive Foss, *Nicaea: A Byzantine Capital and its Praises* (Brookline, MA, 1996); and Christina Pinatsi, "New Observations on the Pavement of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Nicaea," *BZ*, 99(1) (2006), 119–26, who offers an important re-dating of the pavement mosaics to the early thirteenth century.

⁹⁶ The embroidered church may be compared to the painted architectural model represented in the hands of Peter on the interior of the church of San Lorenzo, a fresco cycle produced around 1312. On these frescoes, see Robert S. Nelson, "A Byzantine Painter in Trecento Genoa: The Last Judgment at S. Lorenzo," *ArtB*, 67(4) (1985), 458–566; Clario Di Fabio, *La Cattedrale di*

emphasize its entrance, similar to the miniature of Constantinople preserved in Vatican manuscript 1851 (Figure 3.9).⁹⁷ Putting the viewer at a slightly elevated vantage point, the manuscript depiction aligns the great bronze doors, the ceremonial entrance to the city, with the entrance to the Great Church, crowned by an immense tympanum and domed roof pierced by windows. The embroidery similarly stresses the great doors of the church, which are framed by rising tympana, windows, and dome. It is toward these doors that the emperor, archangel, and saint are processing; the imperial and saintly figure even gestures toward them. The sacred building stands for the city of Genoa and is positioned to emphasize its threshold – in other words, to emphasize potentiality and liminality.⁹⁸ There may well also be a fluidity of associations at play here: just as it represents San Lorenzo, standing for Genoa, it may also allude to Hagia Sophia, metonym for Constantinople, whose restoration to Byzantine rule was the objective of the treaty for which the textile was created.

While the unique image of the emperor being led by St Lawrence to the doors of San Lorenzo relates ultimately to the larger message of the textile as a whole, there are Byzantine art historical precedents for the clasping of wrists and the leading of figures. In terms of religious iconography, scenes of the Anastasis, as in the Athens *epigonation* (Figure 1.15), present relatively consistent conventions for the clasping of wrists, although they generally exhibit a more pronounced sense of dynamism and urgency than the calm procession-like tone of the central scene of the textile in Genoa.⁹⁹ In the central scene of the textile, St Lawrence moves toward the church on the

Genova nel medioevo, secoli VI–XIV (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana, 1998); and Robert S. Nelson, “Byzantine Icons in Genoa before the *Mandylion*” in A. R. Calderoni Masetti, C. Dufour Bozzo, and G. Wolf (eds.), *Intorno al Sacro Volto: Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI–XIV)* (Venice, 2007), 79–92. On the depiction of architectural models held in hands of saints and patrons, see discussion in the next chapter. Also relevant to the discussion is S. Ćurčić and E. Hadjityrphonos (eds.), *Architecture as Icon: Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art* (Princeton, 2010).

⁹⁷ Also like the textile in Genoa, this illuminated manuscript was custom-made as a gift for a foreign audience. The book, however, was made for a foreign princess arriving in Constantinople to marry the heir to the throne of Byzantium. See Hilsdale, “Constructing a Byzantine *Augusta*,” 458–83; and, for an alternate dating, Cecily J. Hennessy, “A Child Bride and Her Representation in the Vatican *Epithalamion*, Cod. Gr. 1851,” *BMGS*, 30(2) (2006), 115–50.

⁹⁸ On the importance of the threshold to imperial ceremony, the liminal narthex zone and imperial doors of Hagia Sophia in particular, see Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 84–114, and further discussion in Chapter 2. Again, the central scene's potential entrance bears associations of church union and has been related to the unionist agenda that marked Michael's reign.

⁹⁹ The principal study of the iconography of the Anastasis is Anna Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986).

right – his body is turned ever so slightly in that direction along with his feet, and his left hand gestures there – and yet his head is crooked back to the left (echoing the much sharper crook of the archangel's head) toward the eastern emperor, whom he clasps by the wrist. Even though the saint's position lacks the drama typical of Christ in scenes of the Anastasis, it subtly echoes such a pose. One of the most significant departures from the Anastasis depictions, however, lies in the scale of the three figures: unlike Christ, who is generally represented as larger than the other figures in the Anastasis, the emperor on the *peplos* appears the same size and on the same grounding as the sacred figure who holds his wrist and leads him to the right.

Images of intercession and donation provide the closest model for the central scene's arrangement. It is in this pictorial context that we find the close contiguity of holy figures and living patrons or donors most frequently.¹⁰⁰ Two images in particular, which have been brought together by Nancy Ševčenko as examples of the close encounter between holy figures and the faithful, merit closer scrutiny.¹⁰¹ In monumental form at Mileševa, on the south wall of the Church of the Ascension painted around 1235, Prince Vladislav is depicted being led to Christ by the Virgin (Figure 1.16).¹⁰² Christ sits on the left, book held open in one hand, and the other hand gestures in acknowledgment toward the pair approaching from the right, first the Virgin and then the prince, who holds a model of the church with his left hand, his right wrist clasped by the Virgin, just as the Palaiologan emperor's left is clasped by St Lawrence. A mid- to late thirteenth-century

¹⁰⁰ The subject of portraits and donation has been surveyed by A. Stylianou and J. A. Stylianou, "Donors and Dedicatory Inscriptions, Supplicants and Supplications in the Painted Churches of Cyprus," *JÖBG*, 9 (1960), 97–128; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece* (Vienna, 1992); Lynn Rodley, "Patron Imagery from the Fringes of the Empire" in D. C. Smythe (ed.), *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider; Papers from the Thirty-second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998* (Aldershot, 2000), 163–78; C. Jäggi, "Donator oder Fundator? Zur Genese des monumentalen Stifterbildes," *Georges-Bloch-Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Universität Zürich*, 9–10 (2002–3), 27–45. Nancy P. Ševčenko and Annemarie Weyl Carr have examined most fully the self-referentiality of votive images with donor portraits. For the later Byzantine period in particular, see the surveys by Velmans, "Le portrait," 93–148, and Hans Belting, "Die Auftraggeber der spätbyzantinischen Bildhandschrift" in the same volume, 151–76, as well as the recent studies by Kambourova, "Pouvoir et prière" and "Ktitor: le sens du don des panneaux votifs," 261–87; and Carr, "Donors in the Frames of Icons," 189–98. See also note 43 in the Introduction.

¹⁰¹ Ševčenko, "Close Encounters," 255–85.

¹⁰² On Mileševa, see G. Babić, "Le portrait du roi Vladislav en fondateur dans le naos de l'église de Mileševa" in V. J. Đurić (ed.), *Mileševa u istoriji srpskog naroda: Međunarodni naučni skup povodom sedam i po vekova postojanja; juni 1985* (Belgrade, 1987), 9–16, with bibliography.



Figure 1.16 Vladislav led to Christ by the Virgin, Church of the Ascension, Mileševa, Serbia, c. 1235

Gospel book in the Iveron monastery on Mount Athos similarly depicts intercession and donation (Figure 1.17a–b).¹⁰³ On the recto of folio 457, the donor, identified as John, holds a book in his left hand. His right is clasped by the Virgin, who leads him to the left, where across the page the enthroned Christ raises his hand in a gesture of speech, while John Chrysostom stands close behind recording the encounter on a long scroll. A legalistic tone of this scene of intercession closely resembles the protocol of imperial petition, where court intermediaries would negotiate contact between humble suppliant and supplicated emperor.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Iveron 5, fol. 456v–7r. On Iveron 5, see Karakatsanis (ed.), *Treasures of Mount Athos*, 214 (no. 5.17); S. M. Pelekanides *et al.* (eds.), *Treasures of Mount Athos* (Athens, 1974), 2:296–303; and G. Galavaris, *Holy Monastery of Iveron: Illustrated Manuscripts* (Mount Athos, 2002). Both Falcone, “Il ‘Pallio’ bizantino,” 340, and Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 238–9, have noted the close stylistic relationship between the textile in Genoa and Iveron 5. On the donor image of Iveron 5 in particular, see Ševčenko, “Close Encounters,” 273; Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 84–7; Hans Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch in der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft* (Heidelberg, 1970), 35–7.

¹⁰⁴ See Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch*, 36; and H. Hunger, “Die Herrschaft des ‘Buchstabens’: Das Verhältnis der Byzantiner zu Schrift- und Kanzleiwesen,” *ΔΧΑΕ*, 12 (1984), 37.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1.17a–b Christ with John Chrysostom and the Virgin with John, the Holy Monastery of Iveron, Mount Athos, cod. 5, fol. 456v–457r, thirteenth century

A similar mapping of contemporary court protocol onto a visual program has been observed by Robert Nelson in the “Enrollment for Taxation” scene of the early fourteenth-century narthex mosaics of the Chora Monastery (Kariye Camii) in Constantinople, where the scene of biblical tax collection, in part, adopts conventions of a contemporary imperial audience (Figure 1.18).¹⁰⁵ In both mosaic and manuscript scenes, the authority figure (Cyrenius at Chora, Christ in Iveron 5) is accompanied by a scribe. At the Chora, costume assists the viewer in making the associations between contemporary imperial and biblical worlds. But in scenes of intercession, earthly and divine figures appear together in the same composition either within the same pictorial space, as in the Mileševa fresco, or across the page from one another, as in Iveron 5. Moreover, on the Iveron manuscript and the textile in Genoa, sacred and earthly figures are brought into analogy through name. John Chrysostom, who acts as scribe in the Iveron codex, records Christ’s words of blessing for his earthly namesake John. And on the textile,

¹⁰⁵ Robert S. Nelson, “Taxation with Representation: Visual Narrative and the Political Field of the Kariye Camii,” *ArtH*, 22(1) (1999), 56–82.

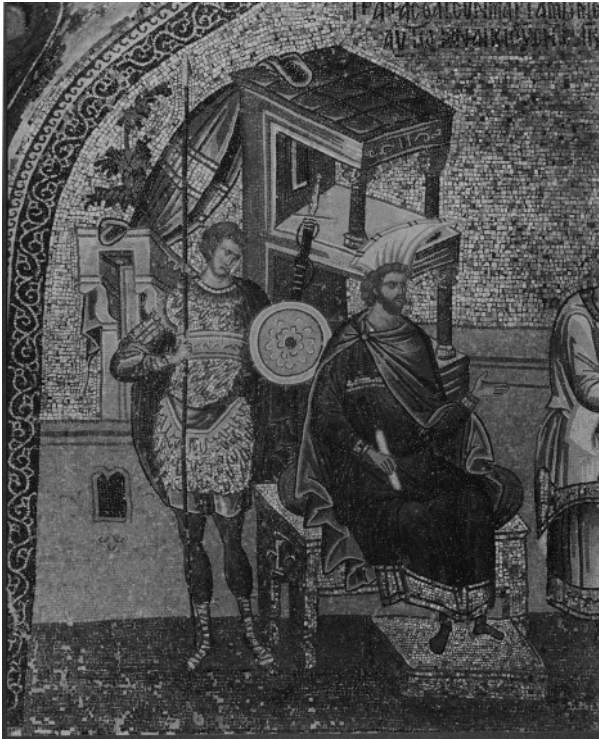


Figure 1.18 Enrollment for Taxation, outer narthex mosaics, Chora Monastery (Kariye Camii), c. 1316–21, Constantinople

the emperor Michael is embraced by his archangelic namesake – the leader of the heavenly hosts sanctions the union of the earthly leader of Byzantium and St Lawrence's church.

In these intercession scenes, contemporary donors interact with sacred figures. As on the textile in Genoa, the donors are led by the wrist. These scenes also exhibit precisely the same self-referential logic as does the textile. John, the *ktetor* of the Iveron manuscript, holds in his hand the codex that stands as a smaller representation of the larger book whose very pages contain the image itself. Similarly, Vladislav holds in his hand the church that bears his representation. Michael too is depicted in front of the church that is intended to be the repository of the very textile woven with his portrait. But the silk exhibits displacement: Michael is the patron not of San Lorenzo but of the textile destined for that church. Michael's image therefore functions as a donor scene despite the fact that his gift is not depicted literally in his hand. His gift is the very silk, a gift intimately

bound with the diplomatic circumstances of its creation. The textile both commemorates and participates in this diplomatic exchange.¹⁰⁶

The scene of intercession at the center of the piece, which is the nexus of the whole program, differs profoundly from other scenes of intercession. The earthly figure, the emperor, despite his being led rather than leading, is not reduced in scale, and he shares the pictorial space of the sacred figures entirely.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, he is being led toward the doors of the church, not toward a holy entity, thus presenting a fundamentally locative scene of intercession. Furthermore, the emperor is distinctly pictured as part of a triad. The combination of triad and clasped wrists echoes early Byzantine scenes of marital union, in particular that of the gesture of the *dextrarum iunctio*. Perhaps this is not surprising, considering that Holobolos's encomium employed the metaphor of the lover and beloved for the Genoese ambassadors and the emperor in order to underscore the potential power of the imperial image. In addition to a series of rings bearing this imagery, a marriage belt at Dumbarton Oaks depicts the bride and groom with hands clasped in front of Christ, who presides over the joining of hands (Figure 1.19).¹⁰⁸ Ernst Kantorowicz has examined the development of this imagery from pre-Christian scenes of union, elaborating how the images take on a quasi-legal valence, with Christ in the position of *concordia pronuba* witnessing and sanctioning the union. The tripartite arrangement of *pronuba*

¹⁰⁶ This self-referential logic of donation is consistent with donor figures on Byzantine icons, which, Ševčenko has argued, "reenact the donation" rather than merely record it. The icon, Ševčenko eloquently states in "Representation of Donors," 157, "is both the commemoration of the gift and the very gift itself."

¹⁰⁷ In the funerary context, the Archangel Michael acts as mediator for the deceased in the tomb of John I Angelos Komnenos Doukas (d. 1289) at the Panagia Monastery, Porta (Pyle). There he clasps the deceased by the wrist and leads him to the seated Virgin and Child, but the archangelic figure is noticeably larger in scale than the earthly figure. See Sarah T. Brooks, "Poetry and Female Patronage in Late Byzantine Tomb Decoration: Two Epigrams by Manuel Philes," *DOP*, 60 (2006), 235 and figs. 5–6.

¹⁰⁸ E. H. Kantorowicz, "On the Golden Marriage Belt and the Marriage Rings of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," *DOP*, 14 (1960), 1–16; Ioli Kalavrezou (ed.), *Byzantine Women and Their World* (New Haven, 2003), 229–30 (cat. no. 131); Gudrun Bühl (ed.), *Dumbarton Oaks: The Collections* (Washington DC, 2008), 108–9. See also Gary Vikan, "Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium," *DOP*, 44 (1990), 145–63, especially 161–2. A similar piece also exists in the Louvre: see Musée du Louvre, *Byzance: l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris, 1992), 133–4 (cat. no. 89). On one of the seventh-century silver plates in Cyprus known as the David Plates, we encounter a similar configuration among Old Testament figures. Under a stylized classical architectural backdrop with offerings placed in the foreground, Saul presides over the marriage of his daughter Micah to David. See Ruth E. Leader, "The David Plates Revisited: Transforming the Secular in Early Byzantium," *ArtB*, 82(3) (2000), 407–27, followed by Ruth E. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Aldershot, 2003).



Figure 1.19 Marriage belt with bridal couple and Christ, sixth–seventh century, Dumbarton Oaks

and *dextrarum iunctio* seen in early marital iconography does not present an exact match for the central scene on the Genoese textile – for one, the thirteenth-century emperor's left wrist is clasped, not his right – but there are some common formal and thematic echoes that make marital union a fitting model for the visualization of a diplomatic pact. Gary Vikan has pointed out that the supervisory role of Christ in scenes of *dextrarum iunctio* is emphasized by his close physical contact with the couple in order to suggest blessing. On nearly all of the series of rings with *dextrarum iunctio* imagery, he writes: “Christ appears to be touching the couple, either on the shoulders, the hands, or the head.”¹⁰⁹ On the textile, the *pronuba* position is occupied by the archangel. His hand rests intimately on the Byzantine emperor's shoulder in this scene of union, constituting a gesture of assent, support, and sanction.

The close association of the emperor and the archangel is a consistent feature of images of the first Palaiologan emperor. Not surprisingly, the Genoese ambassadors of Holobolos's speech explicitly address Michael as

¹⁰⁹ Vikan, “Art and Marriage,” 160 n. 115.

an angel. “You are an Angel, an Angel of Light, a Benevolent Angel (ἄγγελος ἀγαθός),” they intone, as they implore him to be their helmsman.¹¹⁰ The Typikon for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios expresses a personal relationship between Michael and his archangelic namesake. The emperor claims to have been “rescued” on a number of occasions “through the ministry of the leader of the immaterial beings, Michael, whom, from God and after God, I have been fortunate to have as the vigilant guardian of my life in the midst of many dangers, many precarious and fearsome situations, some originating within [the empire] while others were due to external forces. He came to my assistance in time of war and gloriously took me to his side. Many times he led me to victory over both domestic and foreign foes.”¹¹¹

The emperor and the archangel appear together in relation to the city on significant commissions after the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople, such as the bronze monumental sculptural group erected in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles, the subject of the next chapter, and on Michael VIII’s new gold *hyperpyra*, the subject of Chapter 3. The obverse of the new coinage depicts the Virgin surrounded by the walls of Constantinople, an image inspired by the Byzantine restoration of the imperial capital, and the reverse shows the emperor on knee being presented to Christ by his saintly namesake (Figures 3.2–3.4).¹¹² While the combination of the obverse imagery of the Virgin of the walls with the reverse of the emperor with the archangel and Christ begins after the Byzantine restoration of the imperial capital, to celebrate explicitly the return of the Virgin’s favor to the city, as we will see in Chapter 3, this same reverse iconography was first struck in Magnesia, mint for the Empire of Nicaea, before the Byzantine

¹¹⁰ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:46.16–17; and Siderides, “Μανουήλ Ὁλοβώλου,” 189. Many of Holobolos’s orations, including those composed to accompany the *prokypsis* ceremony, include angelic imagery. See, for example, J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca e codicibus regiis* (Hildesheim, 1962), 5:167, 173–5. In emphasizing the assimilation of the imperial and the angelic in the thirteenth century, in “The Heavenly Court” in *Byzantine Court Culture*, Henry Maguire points out that the “angelic emperor was a topos, but not an unchanging one” in verbal and visual rhetoric. See his related comments in “Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art,” *Gesta*, 28(2) (1989), 217–31, 223–4.

¹¹¹ *BMGD*, 3:1215–16. Typika, including this one, are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

¹¹² *DOC V/2*, nos. 2–25; Cécile Morrisson, “L’hyperpère de Michel VIII Paléologue et la reconquête de Constantinople,” *Le Club français de la Médaille, Bulletin*, 55–6 (1977), 76–86; and Anthony Cutler, *Transfigurations: Studies in the Dynamics of Byzantine Iconography* (University Park, 1975), 111–41. In “The Emperor, the Saint, and the City: Coinage and Money in Thessalonike from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century,” *DOP*, 57 (2003), 179–86, Cécile Morrisson contrasts the treatment of the city and emperor on Michael’s coinage to the ruler-city configuration on Thessalonian coinage.

restoration of Constantinople.¹¹³ The iconography of the reverse is therefore contemporary with the textile in Genoa. This coincidence indicates that the emperor alongside the archangel was a well-established trope in Nicaea, and that their relationship was portrayed as close and intimate.

The coin and the central scene of the textile share another key element. The emperor occupies a seemingly humble position on each – he is shown kneeling on the coin and being led by the wrist on the *peplos* – and yet this humility serves as a means of ultimately expressing power. At the same time as he adopts a position of apparent humility, the emperor is shown simultaneously being blessed or sanctioned by a holy figure. On the silk, his archangelic namesake embraces him and rests his hand intimately on his shoulder, and on the coin Christ touches his crown in a gesture that suggests divine approval. This distinction in imperial tenor – between the emphasis on coronation and legitimation of the coin versus the idiosyncratic scene of intercession on the silk – indicates the different audiences for each imperial image. While coinage is intended for a wide and anonymous audience, the silk, materially related to specie in diplomatic contexts, was designed with one particular foreign audience in mind.

Visualizing largesse through *synkrisis*

The addition of the contemporary imperial image, modeled primarily on scenes of intercession, complicates the formal design of the textile. Not only did it prompt a redistribution of the hagiographic sequencing (relegating the scene of Sixtus's burial to the lower level), it also put into direct dialogue hagiographic and imperial narratives. Henry Maguire has emphasized that the rhetorical technique of comparison, or *synkrisis*, introduces “paradigmatic meanings into syntagmatically composed narratives.”¹¹⁴ Through visual juxtapositions and comparisons, he claims, higher levels of signification are produced. According to rhetorical formulae for imperial encomia handed down from Menander Rhetor, a good emperor should be compared to noble figures such as David, Solomon, or Constantine, and a bad emperor to Saul, Pharaoh, or Herod. Such rhetorical strategies abound in encomia, where the emperor's might typically surpasses that of Abaris, Gyges, and

¹¹³ DOC V/2, no. 1, departs from previous traditions by showing on its reverse the emperor not being crowned by the Virgin, who appears on the obverse enthroned, but rather being presented to Christ by his saintly namesake, the Archangel Michael. This reverse imagery, then, continues on coinage struck in Constantinople.

¹¹⁴ Henry Maguire, “The Art of Comparing in Byzantium,” *ArtB*, 70(1) (1988), 88.

Kroises – and where his sins are forgiven like David’s.¹¹⁵ The art of comparison, Maguire argues, extended far beyond the literary genre of encomia and constituted integral mental equipment for any educated Byzantine. The visual arts in particular, he claims, became one of the main realms for comparison, where one of the most “distinctive characteristics” of Byzantine art was the *topos* of “compositionally balanced pairs that mirror each other either formally, or thematically, or both.”¹¹⁶ Comparison through formal mirroring occurs in the Genoese textile, where formal and thematic juxtapositions of praise and censure produce a commentary on imperial largesse.

The central image of the Byzantine emperor Michael, led by the saint with the support of the archangel, is set in opposition to three other scenes (1, 9, and 16) of the ancient Roman Emperor Decius. Titular distinctions serve to distance the contemporary from the historic ruler: both are described as emperors, but the ancient ruler is called merely “Emperor Decius,” whereas more lengthy nomenclature designates the thirteenth-century emperor: *Altissimum Imperatorem Grecorum Dominum Michaellem Ducam Angelum Comnenum Paleologum*. The inscription specifies Michael explicitly as Greek Emperor (*Imperator Grecorum*). While this profound idiosyncrasy bears larger implications for the development of Byzantine imperial identity in exile, within the pictorial program of the textile, such a distinction verbally underscores a relationship of opposition between the two imperial figures: the contemporary “Greek” emperor and the ancient (Roman) emperor. Beyond titular distinctions, a subtle costume motif further indicates that the two rulers on the textile correspond to each other, though separated in time, as models of good and bad rule. In the two scenes of confrontation between martyrs and the ancient ruler on the upper register (scenes 1 and 9), Decius wears a sharply pointed headdress whose shape is associated with contemporary Byzantine court costume. It is depicted on courtiers in a late twelfth-century manuscript in the Vatican and it is also worn by Cyrenius in the Chora mosaics (Figure 1.18).¹¹⁷ This headdress,

¹¹⁵ See Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 87–8, for a compilation of figures to whom Michael VIII is compared in imperial panegyric, as will be further discussed in the beginning of the next chapter. Significantly, Michael is lauded as the new Zorobabel for leading his people back to the New Jerusalem. See also Magdalino and Nelson, “The Emperor in Byzantine Art.”

¹¹⁶ Maguire, “Art of Comparing,” 89.

¹¹⁷ On Vatican 1851, where the headdress appears on courtiers on folios 2v and 1r, see note 97 above. On court dress at the Chora, see Paul Underwood, *The Kariye Djami* (New York, 1966), 1:42; and Nelson, “Taxation with Representation,” 58–9. Paribeni, “Il pallio di San Lorenzo,” 244 n. 44, and Falcone, “Il ‘Pallio’ bizantino,” 347–8, refer to the headdress worn by Decius on the upper register of the textile in Genoa as a *toupha*. The *toupha* holds a privileged position

possibly the *skiadion* described by pseudo-Kodinos, arches upward, forming a peaked projection in front.¹¹⁸ The fact that it is the other emperor, the ancient Roman emperor, who is contemporized through dress suggests that he is to be read against, as a negative counterpart to, the only other contemporary imperial figure on the cloth, namely the Byzantine (“Greek”) emperor, Michael Palaiologos.

The rationale for Decius’s contemporary headdress has been explained by one scholar as a means of demoting the ancient Roman ruler: “this hat of higher nobility and officialdom [was] more suitable than any crown for an emperor who was both heathen and tyrant.”¹¹⁹ However, contemporary sources suggest that the *skiadion* was not limited to officials, but was also worn by the emperor himself – it was a more fluid element of court dress.¹²⁰ Rather than fixing the station of the ancient ruler, the costume motif guides the viewer through the visual program and differentiates the two authority figures.¹²¹ The elaborate headdress exaggerates Decius’s position of authority and highlights his role as a persecutor in contradistinction to Michael. On the upper register of the textile, Decius sits enthroned, hand raised in a gesture of command and speech, guarded by two armed soldiers (scenes 1 and 9). His portrayal is unmistakably – and stereotypically – confrontational,¹²² whereas the Byzantine (“Greek”) emperor is depicted

in art historical literature on the lost equestrian statue of Justinian in the Augustaion, which will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter. For the ideological valences of court dress in the later Byzantine period more generally, see the compelling article by Maria Parani, “Cultural Identity and Dress: The Case of Late Byzantine Ceremonial Costume,” *JÖB*, 59 (2007), 95–134.

¹¹⁸ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 141–66, 180, 207, 227, 279. On the *skiadion*, see Nancy Ševčenko, “Skiadion,” *ODB*; and Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality*, 68–70 with a definition at 349. The headdress represented on the upper register of the textile is distinct from the sort of winged headgear often designating persecutors, as in the mosaics of the Massacre of the Innocents at the Chora, a headgear studied by Ruth Mellinkoff in “Demonic Winged Headgear,” *Viator*, 16 (1985), 367.

¹¹⁹ Johnstone, “Byzantine ‘Pallio,’” 107. Johnstone compares Decius’s hat to contemporary dress represented at the Chora, but does not identify the motif as either a *toupha* or a *skiadion*.

¹²⁰ Parani points this out in *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 70. Again, Pseudo-Kodinos describes members of different rank, including the emperor, wearing this headdress.

¹²¹ As a comparative example, in the exonarthex frescoes of the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos, elaborate court headdresses also serve as visual clues of opposition. In order to draw a contrast between asceticism and gluttony, a lavish banquet attended by wealthy guests wearing a wide array of distinctive court headdresses sits adjacent to the representation of the Heavenly Ladder of John Klimakos, which relates directly to monastic pursuits. Sharon Gerstel, “Civic and Monastic Influences on Church Decoration in Late Byzantine Thessalonike,” *DOP*, 57 (2003), 234–5, notes the startling contrast “between the earnestly ascending monks and the banqueters” that illustrates the twentieth step of the ladder “on Alertness.”

¹²² These are the basic visual configurations for the confrontation between a martyr and Roman authority. The inscriptions too suggest a conventionality of the scenes involving Decius. In all

in a scene of union and affection, led toward the church by the saint, the archangel's hand resting intimately on his shoulder. The arrangement of the ancient emperor follows well-established conventions for the persecutor, while the configuration of the contemporary ruler innovatively draws on scenes of intercession and union. To reinforce this comparison, the artist has formally arranged the two scenes of Decius in this particular headgear to mirror each other at either edge of the upper register, thus framing the Palaiologan emperor, who appears in the privileged central space of the textile.¹²³ The design, in this sense, frames the example of good rule with that of bad rule: while Decius condemns martyrs to death, Michael not only brings peace but is invited to the sacred space of the church of Genoa, the focal point of the textile and its largest formal element. This concept of Michael as the exemplum of good rule is appropriate for the function of the cloth. For, unlike past persecutors, Michael is an ally; in the words of his encomiast Holobolos, he is Genoa's "beloved" and his image will be their great *pharmakon*.

While the praiseworthy and blameworthy emperors are put into explicit visual *synkrisis* of opposition on the textile, the good Byzantine emperor is also implicitly compared to the sacred hagiographic figures. Michael is at once set against the tyrannical actions of Decius and is set alongside saintly transaction and distribution. Although the iconographic cycle of St Lawrence was uncommon in Byzantium in the thirteenth century, it nevertheless presented the ideal imagery for this diplomatic occasion: the identity of the saint relates to the church for which the silk was destined and, moreover, the saint's narrative is governed by exchange and transaction, central concerns of the treaty for which the silk was created. Juxtaposing saintly transaction with contemporary diplomacy, the imperial scene of union is surrounded by hagiographic episodes that emphasize the sale and distribution of wealth. The first scene on the upper register at the far left (the logical spatial beginning of the story) and the sixth scene (its narrative or temporal beginning) both refer to the selling of property. In scene 6 Lawrence is ordered to distribute the belongings of the church and in scene 1 he is confronted about that sale. In a total of five scenes on the top

three, the inscriptions simply state the St Xistus, Laurentius, or Ypolitus "disputans imperatori Decio."

¹²³ It is also significant that Decius does not wear the court headdress in the lower register, where his relation to Michael is not as direct. In the upper register, however, the two instances of such headgear physically point to the center, formally guiding the viewer's eye. Cf. Paribeni, "Il pallio di San Lorenzo," 236, which notes inconsistencies in dress throughout the textile.

register, in fact, the inscription makes explicit references to the selling or distributing of property (scenes one, two, six, seven, and eight), and in all the other scenes, save the central scene on the top register, which evokes contemporary diplomacy, the sale is implied by virtue of its consequences. This is neither accidental nor merely conventional, I would argue, since there was no well-established Byzantine pictorial tradition for the story of St Lawrence. The textile's visual program emphatically underscores the notion of transaction through the noble and pious transaction that was unjustly punished.

Furthermore, the seamless flow from the central imperial scene to the opening of the hagiographic narrative suggests that both emperor and saint participate in the same overarching plot of largesse. The Genoese church serves as the formal setting for two scenes: the symbolic entrance of the Byzantine emperor and also the backdrop for the opening scene of the hagiographic story where Sixtus, book in hand, gestures toward Lawrence with his command to distribute. Lawrence turns his head back to meet Sixtus's gaze while his body faces forward toward the group of potential buyers.¹²⁴ He holds a chalice and censor in one hand and a paten in the other while the group of anonymous buyers are positioned with outstretched hands. The one closest to the saint touches the chalice base to suggest that the process of transaction is already underway. Immediately following, the figure of Lawrence is repeated (scene 8), his body and attention directed toward the mass of poor approaching with outstretched hands. Transaction gives way to distribution with the next scene. The coin rather than the chalice constitutes the point of physical contact between the saint and the group: still in Lawrence's closed hand, it touches the first figure's open hand, into which it is on the verge of being deposited. The scenes on the upper-right register visually create an analog of sale and of distribution where the recipients of both coin and church treasures (by both sale and donation) are put in parallel, and they culminate in a scene of condemnation and persecution. Then in the pendant position on the far left of the textile (scene 2), a transformation of value ensues: the sold church property, already converted again into money for distribution, is transformed into the recipients themselves, loaded onto an ox-drawn cart for display before Decius. These scenes again result in punishment. Formally, therefore, the top register is divided into two narratives of sale and distribution, both presided over by

¹²⁴ This posture echoes that of Lawrence in scene 6, where he is turned toward the right, propelling the visual narrative, but his head turns back slightly toward the Byzantine emperor.

the “bad” emperor, and they are separated spatially and inaugurated by the central scene of the “good” emperor, sanctioned by St Lawrence and the archangel.

On a subtle rhetorical level, the textile provides a visual justification for Michael’s diplomatic actions: in order to enter into an alliance with the Genoese, he offered on very liberal terms substantial commercial privileges in addition to silk and specie. Responding to the treaty’s terms, Peter Schreiner notes: “Nel trattato del Ninfeo Michele vendette un intero impero per niente.”¹²⁵ As an appropriate comparative story, the life of St Lawrence’s martyrdom concerns equitable and just distribution. To emphasize the actions of sale and distribution, the design adopts the format of continuous narration, where visual details are adumbrated rather than abbreviated to a single scene of martyrdom.¹²⁶ By selectively delineating and attenuating the specific episodes in the saint’s life that relate to exchange or transaction, the silk ultimately becomes a visual encomium to the Byzantine emperor despite the fact that the intended recipients were Genoese. While the cloth addresses its intended Genoese audience with its iconography and its Latin letters, the piece as a whole articulates Byzantine superiority through distinctly Byzantine rhetorical conventions such as *synkrisis*. Michael’s actions are sanctioned by the saint and archangel; he is beloved, pious, and powerful, while Decius is merely powerful. Decius persecutes those who distribute wealth, while Michael, in the very act of giving the textile, demonstrates his generosity.

In sum, the designers of the textile embedded the imperial narrative within the hagiographic cycle so as to create through *synkrisis* a visual encomium of contemporary imperial largesse. The emperor is explicitly contrasted to Decius: through costume, titulature, and formal arrangement, the praiseworthy generous Byzantine emperor is opposed to the blameworthy ancient ruler who persecutes noble transaction. At the same time, the emperor is also compared implicitly to the textile’s saintly protagonists through generosity and just exchange. Titos Papamastorakis has noted the close correspondence between Michael’s panegyric and his visual

¹²⁵ Schreiner, “Bisanzio e Genova,” 136. See also Parma Armani, “Nuove Indagini,” 35–6.

¹²⁶ As in the icon of St Lawrence in the Malcove Collection, where the saint’s condemnation and torture coalesce into a single scene of martyrdom: the roasting on a gridiron occupies the foreground as the seated emperor, along with other soldiers, observes from behind, and an angel reaches down from above. The events that precede and follow this moment are omitted so as to focus on the martyrdom alone. See Sheila Campbell (ed.), *The Malcove Collection: A Catalogue of the Objects in the Lillian Malcove Collection of the University of Toronto* (Toronto, 1985), 245–6; and *BFP*, 482 (cat. no. 291), where it has been assigned a date in the early 1300s.

representation at the monastery of the Mavriotissa near Kastoria, and has characterized the latter as a “visual encomium” (Figure 2.3a and b).¹²⁷ Holobolos highlights textiles as visual encomia when he describes the revival of the ancient custom of presenting *peploi* woven with images of the emperor’s deeds from that year.¹²⁸ The silk in Genoa also celebrates the emperor’s greatness and his generosity. Not only does it exhibit the same qualities expressed in panegyric, the textile in Genoa also employs rhetorical structures drawn from encomia.

Yet a fundamental difference exists between these verbal and visual encomia. Unlike the one composed for oral performance before the emperor and his court, the textile’s tribute was destined for a foreign audience. Holobolos’s speech is designed to praise Michael in front of the emperor himself, while the textile’s message of imperial praise is directed toward the Genoese. This shift in audience raises the challenge of how to celebrate the emperor in a foreign land – and in a particularly delicate diplomatic context of potential Byzantine–Genoese *amicitia* against the Pope and the Latin Empire of Constantinople.¹²⁹ The solution to this challenge hinges on the vocabulary of gift-giving and largesse, traditional attributes of the imperial ideal, but here subtly crafted to convey a sophisticated message of just and pious largesse without obvious triumphant overtones. Such an agenda governs the particular hagiographic and imperial arrangement, and helps to explain why the emperor’s effigy is so seamlessly integrated into the saintly cycle. Recall that there are no artificial divisions between the scenes and the figures are all depicted in comparable scale. Instead of the traditional imagery of victory, such as presiding over barbarian tribute bearers, immobile and majestic, or triumphantly astride a mount – as on such classic imperial monuments as the base of the obelisk of Theodosius I or the Barberini ivory (Figures 2.9 and 2.10) – Michael’s sovereignty on the silk in Genoa is underscored through subtle rhetorical juxtapositions.

¹²⁷ Titos Papamastorakis, “Ένα εικαστικό εγκώμιο του Μιχαήλ Η΄ Παλαιολόγου: Οι εξωτερικές τοιχογραφίες στο καθολικό της μονής της Μαυριώτισσας στην Καστοριά,” *ΔΧΑΕ*, 15 (1989–90), 221–38. Kastoria will be further addressed in Chapter 2.

¹²⁸ Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 28–30.

¹²⁹ In the textile’s concerted effort to differentiate between the two imperial figures, it is tempting to read another political message directed specifically toward the Genoese concerning their diplomatic involvement with the Byzantine emperor of the “Greeks” against the other contemporary emperor, the Latin Emperor of Constantinople. The textile offers a message of pious transaction, sanctioned by a powerful sacro-imperial triumvirate – the leader of heavenly hosts, head of the Byzantine “Greek” empire in exile, and patron of Genoa’s cathedral. Through the Treaty of Nymphaion, the Genoese entered into an alliance (transaction) with the schismatic Greeks against the Pope’s candidate for the Empire of Constantinople. The imagery, on some level, visually justifies this engagement.

This more subtle visual logic is explained by its function as a diplomatic gift given to seal a pact that aimed at the restoration of Constantinople and the legitimation of Michael Palaiologos. The entire design of the silk, I have argued, articulates this diplomatic agenda. In much the same way, the lost textile given in conjunction with the Council of Lyons depicted a saintly sanctioned pictorialization of Byzantine–western allegiance. Both were extended as state gifts in moments of great diplomatic importance and uncertainty. They each relied on unconventional modes of imperial representation as visual solutions for praising the emperor in an urgent yet delicate diplomatic situation abroad. The fact that Holobolos fails to mention the imperial effigy on the St Lawrence silk, such an important state gift, in the words of Macrides “is not surprising if one considers the position in which the emperor is represented.”¹³⁰ Holobolos could have said anything he wanted – *ekphrasis* was not bound by the rules of veracity.¹³¹ He chose not to mention the imperial effigy because, Macrides explains, Byzantine–Genoese tides had turned by 1265, when the first of his imperial orations was delivered.¹³² The diplomatic gift and the imperial oration recording it belong to different worlds.

Conclusion: gifts and rivalry

The silk was executed on the eve of the 1261 Byzantine restoration of Constantinople, a moment when the fate and future configuration of the empire were still very much uncertain. While the design does not represent the emperor as a supplicant in any overt sense – he does not perform *proskynesis*, nor are there first-person petitions in the inscription – he is shown being led to the Genoese church by the wrist, a symbol of East–West allegiance sanctioned by the archangel. But by 1265, when Holobolos’s first oration was delivered in Constantinople, the Genoese were no longer united with the Byzantines in enmity against the Venetians, but rather were planning treason against Michael’s restored Byzantine Empire. Thus,

¹³⁰ Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 35.

¹³¹ On *ekphrasis*, see Henry Maguire, “Truth and Convention in Byzantine Descriptions of Works of Art,” *DOP*, 74 (1974), 113–40; Liz James and Ruth Webb, “‘To Understand Ultimate Things and to Enter Secret Places’: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium,” *ArtH*, 14 (1991), 1–17; Ruth Webb, “Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre,” *Word and Image*, 15(1) (1999), 7–18.

¹³² Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 35, points out that the eagerness with which Holobolos portrays the Genoese desire for an image of the Byzantine emperor “comes at a time when Genoese–Greek relations were not good.”

Holobolos not only omits the scene of Byzantino–Genoese *philia* in his oration but also casts the exchange in such a way that the Byzantine emperor is the recipient of Genoese supplication. The ambassadors even claim to love being subject to Michael’s right hand.¹³³ The idea that the Genoese requested the imperial image further underscores their position of subordination and Holobolos even speaks of the imperial image as a source of love and protection for their city, “which is both yours and ours.” Such a characterization of the Genoese ambassadors is appropriate in the context of the encomium’s delivery before the undisputed emperor of Constantinople. The textile, however, depicts a very different emperor, one still in the process of achieving this singular imperial status. At the time of the textile’s commission, Michael was in residence in Nicaea eyeing rival claimants in Epiros, and he was still co-emperor with the legitimate heir to the Laskarid throne.

Given this context of uncertainty surrounding the textile’s commission, it is tempting to look for deeper meaning in the Byzantine emperor’s characterization as *Imperator Grecorum*. The idiosyncratic nature of this titlature has not gone unnoticed by scholars. Generally it is explained by the fact that the inscription itself, and all the *peplos*’s inscriptions, follow western embroidery techniques and were presumably executed by a western-trained artist. The explanation thus accounts for the title as merely a western convention: the Latin copy of the Treaty of Nymphaion, like other Latin documents of the time, describes the Byzantine emperor as the *Imperatorem Grecorum*.¹³⁴ This same designation on the textile may simply suggest that a Latin artist was responsible for the inscriptions and was adopting the Latin convention. Without denying this convention, I have attributed to the titlature a narrative function within the textile’s overall design: to distance contemporary from ancient ruler as part of a larger logic of visual *synkrisis* entirely appropriate for a gift on the diplomatic occasion of the Treaty of Nymphaion. In closing, I would like to suggest, tentatively at least, a further significance to the Greekness of the emperor on the embroidered silk.

Regardless of western conventions, it remains difficult to imagine that such an important state gift would include titlature, even in Latin, that was considered objectionable from the Byzantine perspective. Members of

¹³³ Treu, *Orationes*, 1:46; and Siderides, “Μανουήλ Ὁλοβώλου,” 188.

¹³⁴ The Byzantine emperor is described as Greek numerous times in the treaty. See Manfroni, “Relazioni,” 791–2, 795, 802. Cf. L. Pieralli, *La corrispondenza diplomatica dell’imperatore bizantino con le potenze estere nel tredicesimo secolo (1204–1282): Studio storico-diplomatico ed edizione critica* (Vatican City, 2006), 42–3, 116–18, 149.

the court at Nicaea were not ignorant of Latin; in fact, Holobolos took the study of Latin seriously and was actively engaged in translation activities.¹³⁵ Despite our lack of knowledge about scriptoria and other artistic workshop practices in Nicaea, it is well known that scholarship flourished at the Laskarid court.¹³⁶ Undergirding the textile's design is a sophisticated rhetorical excursus on diplomacy, transaction, and imperial munificence. With the understanding of the textile as the culmination of imperial ideologies developed in Nicaea, Michael's characterization as *Imperator Grecorum* assumes additional significance.

Scholars have observed that during the Nicene period the term "hellene" came into general use among Byzantine intellectuals as a synonym for "Roman." While its origins lie in the late twelfth century, as part of the burgeoning intolerance of foreigners at the late Komnenian court,¹³⁷ it intensified during the period of exile in tandem with the fragility of imperial authority. Anthony Kaldellis and Dimiter Angelov have cautioned against overemphasizing the impact of Hellenism on the imperial office – by no means did it supplant the predominant Byzantine sense of *Romanitas* even in exile – and yet with Patriarch Germanos II (1223–40) and Michael's predecessor, Emperor Theodore II Laskaris (1254–8), we see a concerted "ethnic Greek self-identification."¹³⁸ In official correspondence with Western churchmen, for example, Germanos II used the term "Graikoi" to describe the "orthodox population within and outside the boundaries of the Nicene

¹³⁵ At a very young age, Holobolos translated Boethius's *De topicis differentiis* and *De hypotheticis syllogismis*. See Elizabeth A. Fisher, "Planoudes, Holobolos, and the Motivation for Translation," *GRBS*, 43 (2002), 77–104; Elizabeth A. Fisher, "Manuel Holobolos, Alfred of Sareshal, and the Greek Translator of ps.-Aristotle's *De Plantis*," *Classica et mediaevalia*, 57 (2006), 189–211; B. Bydén, "'Strangle Them with These Meshes of Syllogisms!': Latin Philosophy in Greek Translations of the Thirteenth Century" in J. O. Rosenqvist (ed.), *Interaction and Isolation in Late Byzantine Culture: Papers Read at a Colloquium Held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1–5 December, 1999* (Stockholm, 2004), 133–57; and Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 67–70. See also note 28 above on Holobolos.

¹³⁶ This was an extremely learned court, as scholars such as Ahrweiler, Angold, Kaldellis, and Angelov have shown. It is clear that books abounded in Nicaea. See Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, 5–27. Blemmydes traveled to Mount Athos and elsewhere to collect books. As noted by N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, rev. edn. (London, 1996), 220, Theodore Laskaris had a personal copy of Aristotle's *Physics* (Ambr. M 46 sup.), and a note in the flyleaf suggests that he read it from beginning to end. It remains unclear, however, what books, if any, were actually copied there. See Giancarlo Prato, "La Produzione libraria in area greco-orientale nel periodo del regno latino d. Costantinopoli (1204–1261)," *Scrittura e civiltà*, 5 (1981), 72.

¹³⁷ The first "unequivocal use of the term 'Hellene' to mean Byzantine" occurs in a letter written by George Tornikes to Manuel I Komnenos: Angold, *Church and Society*, 512. See Magdalino, "Hellenism and Nationalism," and also discussion below, 84–6.

¹³⁸ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 95.

state,” even referring explicitly to the “empire of the Greeks” (Βασιλεία τῶν Γραικῶν).¹³⁹ Greek identity – again as a pendant to Roman, not a replacement – became a means of distancing Nicaenes from the Latins but also, perhaps surprisingly, from rival Greek successor claimants, especially in Epiros. For Akropolites, Nicaea was *Hellenis* (the ancient theme of Hellas), and the Pindos mountains separated “our Hellenic land” (τῆς Ἑλληνίδος καὶ ἡμετέρας γῆς) from Epiros.¹⁴⁰ With this in mind, the description of Michael Palaiologos as *Imperator Grecorum* on the textile sent to Genoa may bear larger implications for the construction of imperial identity in Nicaea. This is not to suggest that it was in any way common to refer to the emperor in such a manner – it is indeed to the best of my knowledge a hapax. On the eve of the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople, the designation is particularly significant because, as is well known, after Michael triumphantly entered the imperial city, he was hailed as a New Constantine.¹⁴¹ Even in a document from one year later in Genoa he is referred to as such.¹⁴² The textile thus evokes a moment before Michael was the New Constantine, when he lacked the legitimacy that Constantinople would later bestow on him and his line.

On the eve of this momentous change, the *grecorum* of the inscription references a number of intellectual currents described by Michael Angold: it

¹³⁹ Angelov, “Byzantine Ideological Reactions,” 301; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 95; and Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 353–4. In Germanos’s use of the term “Graikoi,” Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 96, writes, he found a “religio-ethnic self-signifier applicable to the context of antagonism towards the schismatic Latins.”

¹⁴⁰ *Georgii Acropolitae Opera* (Teubner, 1903), 166.7; Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 356–8; and Angold, “Byzantine ‘Nationalism,’” 64. Angold (*ibid.*, 68) writes: “With the fall of Constantinople the precise meaning of Roman was in doubt and Hellene gave Roman identity a more precise cultural, linguistic, and racial context.” See also Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 345–88. Angelov, “Byzantine Ideological Reactions,” 301–3, considers the different semantic trajectories of the terms Γραικοί and Ἕλληνες, the former as religio-ethnic primarily and the latter linked with secular antique associations. See also Page, *Being Byzantine*, 94–129.

¹⁴¹ See discussion in the next chapter.

¹⁴² In this 1262 document published by L. T. Belgrano, “Cinque Documenti Genovesi-Orientali,” *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, 17 (1885), 227, the Byzantine emperor is described both as a New Constantine and as Greek Emperor: “Michael in Christo Deo fidelis imperator et moderator grecorum a Deo coronatus semper Augustus, Ducas, Angelus, Comnianus, Paleologus et novus Constantinus.” Another document in Genoa from about 1280 describes him merely as Roman emperor, without reference to Greece or to Constantine: “Michael in Christo Deo fidelis imperator et moderator romeorum, Ducas, Angelus, Comninus, Paleologus semper Augustus” (236). In contrasting imperial ideology between Nicaea post-1204 and Constantinople post-1261, Angelov (“Byzantine Ideological Reactions,” 306) points out that Hellenic discourse did continue with the early Palaiologoi – Holobolos even described the Orthodox as Graikoi in an official letter of Michael VIII to Clement IV in late 1266 or 1267 – but figured less prominently than before in Nicaea.

indicates a commitment to the preservation of Hellenic philosophy among the Nicene literati; it offers a new metaphor for exile, casting the Byzantines not only as the children of Israel but also as the ancient Hellenes; and it further articulates an anti-Latin and simultaneously anti-Epirote stance.¹⁴³ The two rival successor states were both actively engaged in building networks of alliances with the goal of reclaiming Constantinople. Both Epiros and Nicaea by the mid-thirteenth century claimed imperial and ecumenical sovereignty (i.e., both had a Byzantine emperor and patriarch). For Epiros too, a diplomatic silk survives, the one associated with the 1210 *promissio* between Epiros and Venice (Figure 1.2). While admittedly it differs from the silk in Genoa in that nothing in its design caters to its particular circumstance, it testifies to many of the same aspirations. Although the Epirote faction was defeated at the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259, as noted above, Epiros remained a very real threat to Michael's empire in Nicaea. After the unsuccessful siege of Galata, it became clear that Michael would need overseas help in order to claim Constantinople before Epiros did. At the same moment, Genoa, after suffering a defeat by the Venetians at Acre (1258), was looking for more profitable trade networks. The coincidence of the Nicene victory at the Battle of Pelagonia and the Genoese defeat at the Battle of Acre set the stage for the Treaty of Nymphaion. Against this backdrop, the use of *grecorum* in the emperor's titlature may suggest more than evidence of western conventions or artists – it serves as a means of differentiating Nicaea from Epiros. This, paired with the distancing of the contemporary Byzantine emperor from the ancient Roman ruler, suggests a sophisticated design that interweaves contemporary rivalries – rivalries involving maritime trading privileges (Genoa and Venice) – and the legitimate succession of Byzantine imperial power (Nicaea and Epiros).¹⁴⁴ Within the context of these rivalries, the imagery of the silk portrays union, but a close reading of the relationship between hagiographic and imperial scenes reveals a message of Byzantine superiority.

The silk in Genoa constituted a point of departure for Hans Belting's reconsideration of Mediterranean artistic categories. Using the term *lingua franca*, he described a class of objects that resist East–West categorization as “un art ni occidental ni byzantin, mais qui développa un nouveau langage, synthétique, aux composantes difficilement distinguable.”¹⁴⁵ The *peplos* initially seems to exemplify this concept well with its combination

¹⁴³ Angold, “Byzantine ‘Nationalism,’” 62–70.

¹⁴⁴ See further discussion in Hilsdale, “The Imperial Image at the End of Exile,” 197–9.

¹⁴⁵ Hans Belting, *Il Medio Oriente e l'Occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo (Atti del XXIV Congresso internazionale di storia dell'arte 2, Bologna 1979)* (Bologna, 1982), 3. Belting's mention of the

of western and eastern pictorial traditions. The tenor of the silk, however, remains decidedly Byzantine. It does not blur boundaries, but rather inscribes difference.¹⁴⁶ Fundamentally it is the product of Byzantium, but one that is tailored for its Genoese audience and its function as a diplomatic gift. In this capacity, its understanding as a *pharmakon* comes into clearer focus: the imperial image as gift may be conceptualized as a remedy for the ardent love of its recipients, per Holobolos, but the design of the silk is governed ultimately by an overarching ideology of hierarchy, not *philia*.

silk within this context has been invoked in nearly all art historical studies of the textile. The four most recent dedicated art historical studies of the textile refer to Belting's passage: Parma Armani, "Nuove Indagini," 38; Falcone, "Il 'Pallio' bizantino," 350 n. 56; Calderoni Masetti, "Considerazioni finali," 407; and Paribeni, "Il pallio di San Lorenzo," 246 n. 54.

¹⁴⁶ A similar argument about visual hierarchy with regard to the formal arrangement of the Byzantine enamels of the Royal Crown of Hungary has been advanced in Hilsdale, "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift," 602–31. Other textiles, such as the so-called Grandson Antependium or the textile of Giovanni Conti recently studied by Michele Bacci, better exemplify the *lingua franca* model. See M. Bacci, "Tra Pisa e Cipro: La Committenza Artistica di Giovanni Conti (+1332)," *Annali della scuola normale superiore di Pisa*, 4(2) (2000), 343–86; and M. Martiniani-Reber, "An Exceptional Piece of Embroidery Held in Switzerland: The Grandson Antependium" in M. Campagnolo and M. Martiniani-Reber (eds.), *From Aphrodite to Melusine: Reflections on the Archaeology and the History of Cyprus* (Geneva, 2007), 85–9 (with earlier bibliography).

2 | Imperial thanksgiving: the commemoration of the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople

As visual testimony to Michael's aspirations on the eve of Constantinople's reconquest, the *peplos* was sent to Genoa not as an anonymous silk in fulfillment of the terms of a treaty, but rather to seal a high-stakes diplomatic pact, one that put the Genoese at risk of papal excommunication and offered Michael the possibility of significant maritime support from abroad in his attempt to claim Constantinople. The previous chapter suggested that the portrayal of the emperor at the threshold of a church, identified by inscription as the church of the Genoese but visually marked as Byzantine, subtly evokes the desired outcome of the treaty for which it was created: the return of the emperor to the Great Church, a symbol of the return of Byzantine imperium to Constantinople. The next two chapters follow the trajectory of the Byzantine restoration by considering two related imperial images that commemorate this momentous event. After 1261, the emperor celebrated the return of Constantinople to Byzantine rule through a new visual vocabulary of gratitude and humility. A monumental bronze statue of thanksgiving was erected in the restored city, and a related imperial design was serially struck and circulated on gold coins.

In response to the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople, both bronze and gold imperial images draw on certain well-established tropes for commemoration, but they also convey a new visual rhetoric inflected by gratitude and instrumentality, in that the emperor is characterized as an instrument of divine will. Indicative of this shift, both depict the emperor on knee. Although this is a conventional posture for Byzantine images of supplication in general, it is exceptionally rare before the Palaiologan period for the emperor to be represented in this pose; traditionally it is reserved for those who supplicate him. Following the restoration of the capital city, however, early Palaiologan emperors appear on knee in these two definitively public works of imperial art. This profound shift in imperial register is the subject of the present and subsequent chapters.

The motivation for this innovation relates to the problematic rule of Michael Palaiologos, who was perceived not only as a usurper but also as a betrayer of Orthodoxy. At the time of the recovery of Constantinople in August 1261, he was, in theory at least, co-emperor with and regent

for the child emperor John IV Laskaris, heir to the line that had ruled from Nicaea since the Crusader conquests of 1204. Michael was proclaimed regent for and co-emperor with John IV, crowned and raised on a shield in January 1259 in Nymphaion, then crowned again in Nicaea a few weeks later.¹ At this time, Michael swore a solemn oath, drafted and administered by Patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos, to refrain from conspiracy against his junior partner.² After the restoration of Constantinople to Byzantine rule, however, Michael was crowned again in Hagia Sophia, and on Christmas Day 1261, he ordered the blinding and imprisonment of the young Laskarid.³ He was then promptly excommunicated, an anathema that remained in effect until 1267. During this period, he repeatedly attempted to receive ecclesiastical penance and pardon from the patriarch. Although he was eventually successful in obtaining pardon, he fell from favor again following the Council of Lyons in 1274 and was ultimately denied the final rites of the Orthodox Church in death.⁴ Despite his triumphant re-establishment of Byzantine rule in Constantinople, it was in the end his usurpation and unionate policies for which he would be remembered. His was, in other words, a fundamentally fraught reign. The two very public imperial images that form the focus of this chapter and the next – a larger-than-life bronze monument erected at a key site of sacro-imperial authority in the restored capital and gold coinage serially struck and disseminated far and wide – are here read as emanations of this ambivalence. Responding to the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople in terms of gratitude and instrumentality, they negotiate tensions in the Palaiologan imperial office inaugurated by such a problematic emperor.

The project of imperial restoration in and of itself inflects the tenor of the imperial image in the early Palaiologan period in innovative ways.

¹ John Laskaris was the son of Theodore II Laskaris, who died in August 1258, leaving George Mouzalon as regent, who was then murdered by Latin mercenaries under Michael Palaiologos's command. See P. Wirth, "Die Begründung der Kaisermacht Michaels VIII. Palaiologos," *JÖB*, 10 (1961), 85–91. See also Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," 205–7; and Dimitar Angelov, "The Confession of Michael VIII Palaiologos and King David," *JÖB*, 56 (2006), 193–204.

² On the significance of these oaths, see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 329; and, more generally, Renaud Rochette, "Empereurs et serment sous les Paléologues" in M.-Fr. Auzépy and G. Saint-Guillain (eds.), *Oralité et lien social au Moyen Âge (Occident, Byzance, Islam): Parole donnée, foi jurée, serment* (Paris, 2008), 160. As Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," 205, points out, Michael had already been suspected of treason several times and "had been required on no less than six previous occasions to swear fidelity to the Laskarid dynasty."

³ According to Angelov, "Confession," 195, Michael "broke the sworn constitutional arrangement." See also Macrides, "The New Constantine," 17 n. 16.

⁴ These issues are treated in further depth later in this chapter and toward the end of Chapter 3.

The coinage and the bronze monument commemorate the good fortune the emperor received, namely the restoration of Constantinople, which was conceptualized as a gift from God – not from the Genoese or from the strength of Michael's troops, or his diplomacy. With the restoration of Constantinople understood as a divinely ordained gift, Michael was characterized merely as the instrument of divine power. In commemoration of this gift, the return of Constantinople to Byzantine rule through Michael, the emperor erected a monument of imperial gift exchange in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles sometime after the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople. This monumental bronze sculptural group, which no longer survives, featured the emperor at the feet of the Archangel Michael offering him a model of the imperial city that he had restored and triumphantly entered in 1261. The discussion that follows considers the relationship between restoration, legitimacy, and genealogy. It begins with a brief overview of early Palaiologan responses to Constantinople's restoration and its patronage, including the cultivation of Michael as a New Constantine. It then provides a sustained investigation of the lost bronze monument and the web of visual associations on which it draws and in turn displays to the restored Byzantine capital.

Constantinople as new Zion

How contemporary Byzantine authors described the restoration of Constantinople is suggestive of a reconfiguration of imperial ideology in the early Palaiologan period. Our main sources for the period by Pachymeres and Gregoras have been mined for information about the circumstances of the imperial capital upon its restoration and about the rebuilding program begun thereafter. These authors also offer evocative statements about the ideological import of the restoration in terms of order, or *taxis*.⁵ Gregoras characterizes the city's return to Byzantine rule as an emancipation and as a return to order:

Enslaved, [Constantinople] had received no care from the Latins except destruction of every kind day and night. The first and most important immediate task facing the

⁵ The concept of *taxis*, which can be understood as both "order" and "ceremony," is central to Byzantine imperial ideology and imperial imagery. See Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin*, 129–47; René Roque, *L'univers dionysien: structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954 [1983]), 36–40; Maguire, "Images of the Court," 183–91. The Dionysian valences of this concept are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

emperor was as much as possible to cleanse the city and transform its great disorder into good order, to strengthen the churches which had completely collapsed, and to fill the empty houses with people.⁶

As the passage suggests, a program of repopulation and rebuilding was necessary to restore order and cleanse the chaos and destruction of the Latin occupation. Indeed, under the first two Palaiologan emperors, the Byzantine capital saw an ambitious program of imperial and aristocratic patronage.⁷ This included the repair of the city's fortifications, most importantly its walls,⁸ and the development of commercial districts with infrastructure for mercantile activities (mills and workshops), as well as the establishment or renovation of key civic municipal structures (baths, schools, and the Hippodrome), residential architecture (numerous palaces and aristocratic residences),⁹ and myriad sacred and charitable houses (hospitals and hospices). Religious foundations were both newly built and renovated by imperial family members and aristocrats, and female members of the extended Palaiologan family in particular were especially active in restoring monasteries, churches, and convents in the capital. Vassilios Kidonopoulos estimates that between the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople in 1261 and the end of the first civil war in 1328, at least

⁶ Gregoras, *Byzantina historia* (Bonn, 1829), I.87–8, translated in Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago, 1984), 270. See also Talbot, "Restoration," 249.

⁷ Scholars have charted a substantial construction campaign during the period under the first Palaiologan emperors. Key studies of later Byzantine Constantinople include Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*; and Klaus-Peter Matschke, *Das spätbyzantinische Konstantinopel: Alte und neue Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte zwischen 1261 und 1453* (Hamburg, 2008), along with the invaluable essays on Palaiologan building and patronage by Alice-Mary Talbot – "Restoration," "Empress Theodora Palaiologina," and "Building Activity in Constantinople under Andronikos II: The Role of Women Patrons in the Construction and Restoration of Monasteries" in Nevra Necipoğlu (ed.), *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life* (Leiden, 2001), 329–44. See also the succinct overviews by Klaus-Peter Matschke, "Builders and Building in Late Byzantine Constantinople" in Necipoğlu (ed.), *Byzantine Constantinople*, 315–28; Kalopissi-Verti, "Patronage and Artistic Production"; and Kidonopoulos, "Urban Physiognomy."

⁸ Talbot, "Restoration," 249. See also Deno J. Geanakoplos, "The Byzantine Recovery of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261: A Chrysobull of Michael VIII Palaeologus in Favor of Hagia Sophia" in *Constantinople and the West: Essays on the Late Byzantine (Palaeologan) and Italian Renaissances and the Byzantine and Roman Churches* (Madison, 1989), 184: "we repaired the walls all around the city, most of which we found completely ruined and which we re-erected from their very foundations, in some other places extending the restored parts for a considerable stretch." The walls of Constantinople, as we will see in the next chapter, appear on the obverse of the gold hyperpyron following the Byzantine restoration.

⁹ The emperor stayed in the Great Palace while basic restoration of the Blacherna was undertaken. See Talbot, "Restoration," 250–1; and Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 384–5.

twenty-eight new churches were built and at least ten pre-existing churches were restored.¹⁰

Michael VIII is personally associated with the patronage of monasteries in and around Constantinople. Specifically, he revived the foundations of his forefathers, as attested by surviving typika, or monastic charters.¹¹ The renewal of these foundations bridged the Latin occupation and brought the Komnenoi and Palaiologoi into alignment. Such a restoration of order through imperial patronage emphasizes genealogy by stressing the continuity of imperial munificence to the imperial city and thus cleansing Constantinople of the chaos and poverty of the interregnum.

The typika for the monasteries of St Demetrios of the Palaiologoi in Constantinople and the Archangel Michael just outside the city each begin with lengthy autobiographical statements in which Michael accounts for key aspects of his rule, including his rise to power and the restoration of Constantinople, and lays out the rationale for his patronage. Both monastic foundations are associated with his illustrious forefathers and their typika make much of this connection. The Monastery of St Demetrios of the Palaiologoi was founded in the twelfth century by George Palaiologos, a prominent member of Michael's family who had played a key role in Alexios I Komnenos's rise to the throne in the eleventh century.¹² Michael's sponsorship of this community thus aligns him through patronage with the founder of the previous dynasty to rule before the Fourth Crusade.¹³ The

¹⁰ Kidonopoulos, "Urban Physiognomy," 107. Talbot, "Restoration," 253, notes that our main textual sources describe the early Palaiologan building agenda in only the most general terms.

¹¹ Talbot, "Restoration," 254 with bibliography at n. 82; Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*, 37–9, 91–3. Typika preserve a wealth of information relevant for Byzantine art historians. There are, however, methodological ambiguities involved with this invaluable archive. Charles Barber, "The Monastic Typikon for Art Historians" in Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby (eds.), *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-Century Monasticism* (Belfast, 1994), 198–214, has astutely outlined the primary avenues art historians have taken with regard to typika as either archaeological or what he calls "response," which pertains to more contextual issues of use and ritual.

¹² *BMFD*, 1237–53. The typikon joins together the monastery of St Demetrios in Constantinople, the exact whereabouts of which remain unknown, and the Kellibara monastery dedicated to the Theotokos Acheiropoietos near Herakleia. On this monastery, see Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*, 37–9. This monastery may have housed the deposed Emperor John IV Laskaris, whose cult was promoted by Andronikos II in 1284. See *BMFD*, 1238. On the cult of the young deposed Laskaris, see Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," 218–21 and the discussion at the conclusion of the next chapter.

¹³ The typikon, which dates back to 1282, emphasizes the blood relation between the current and the original founder of the monastery, and in so doing, the editors of the text point out, it stressed "the hereditary obligations of patronage": *BMFD*, 1239. George Palaiologos is described as receiving honors from the emperor and as the founder of the monastery: *BMFD*, 1247.

Monastery of Archangel Michael on Mount Auxentios, near Chalcedon, was a more recent foundation, attributed to Michael's grandfather according to its typikon, and it was in need of renewal. Because it was "down on its knees," Michael "raised it up again, restored its strength."¹⁴

Typika for both monastic foundations begin with similar statements of thankfulness and indebtedness to God by elaborating all the gifts lavishly bestowed upon the emperor. They continue with explicit descriptions of his illustrious imperial lineage. Concerning the Constantinopolitan monastery, Michael writes that "from far back then God established our illustrious family and laid the foundations for my present rule."¹⁵ Beyond emphasizing Michael's familial relation to great emperors of the past, the same typikon also emphasizes the lineage of his family's patronage, reminding readers of the persistence of Palaiologan munificence:

their erection of religious houses, holy convents and monasteries, their donation of property, their aid to the poor, their concern for the infirm, and their protection of the indigent of all sorts, and all their pious deeds which bore fruit before God. By proclaiming the donor of these, at the same time they purchased goods in heaven in exchange for ephemeral and perishable ones.¹⁶

Michael thus traces the path to his own divinely ordained rule through the sacred economy of salvation.¹⁷ The typikon for the Mount Auxentios monastery similarly stresses his lineage and also includes an allocution to future emperors urging his successors to follow his model and continue serving as benefactors of the monastery.

Both typika further underscore expiation as the motivation of the emperor's building agenda. In the Mount Auxentios typikon, he writes: "since, therefore, it is I who have led the struggle on behalf of the Romans, I who because of human weakness bear the heavy burden of so many sins on my soul, for the expiation of which I have presented this small offering to God, I ask you too, God-loving emperors, to cherish it."¹⁸ Similarly, the other typikon stresses personal sin: "for the expiation of my many failings,

¹⁴ *BMFD*, 1217: "this blessed, illustrious, venerable monastery was founded by the revered grandfather of my majesty." The site was occupied by monks as early as the fifth century. See *BMFD* commentary. According to Talbot ("Restoration," 254), the monastery was probably previously dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, and then rededicated by Manuel VIII to his patron saint.

¹⁵ *BMFD*, 1242. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ On this sacred economy as it is manifest in typika (predominantly in the pre-Palaiologan era), see Vassiliki Dimitropoulou, "Giving Gifts to God: Aspects of Patronage in Byzantine Art" in Liz James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Hoboken, 2010), 161–70.

¹⁸ *BMFD*, 1232.

for it should be no surprise that I too have sinned inasmuch as I am human and thus of a quickly changing or fluctuating nature.”¹⁹

Instrumentality and thanksgiving are common themes to both typika as well. They both allude to the events leading up to the restoration of the capital, including the conquests at Epiros at the Battle of Pelagonia (1259), and they attribute the enslavement of the capital, and its recovery, to divine plan. According to the St Demetrios of the Palaialogoi typikon:

Constantinople, the citadel of the inhabited world, the imperial capital of the Romans, had, with the permission of God, come under control of the Latins. By God’s gift it was returned to the Romans through us . . . This deed had not been accomplished by the hand of men but was a triumph of God’s great power.²⁰

Michael here serves as a mere instrument of divine will and exercise, and agency is reserved for the sacred realm. Furthermore, both typika explain the rationale for Michael’s monastic foundation as an act of thanksgiving for the Lord’s favor. In the Mount Auxentios text, it is described as “some small repayment to God,” “in gratitude for God’s benefactions to me,” “a fair return for a favor . . . a recompense for our struggles and daily labors on behalf of Romania, those undertaken with God’s help before our imperial [accession] and those we continued after [attaining] the rule.”²¹

Like these typika, other sources associate the restoration of Constantinople with divine ordination and expiation. Pachymeres, who seems particularly attuned to the historical distance between the glories of the great empire of the past and the current realities of thirteenth-century Byzantine Constantinople, connects the city’s restoration to sin and divine will. He reasons that the Lord caused the Latins to force the Greeks into exile in Nicaea as an act of divine punishment for previous sins. Then, as “chastisement for the sins we had committed,” Constantinople, “the heart of the empire,” became lifeless, divided among foreigners. “If we have undergone so much fatigue trying to take Constantinople without securing any result,” he writes, “it is because God wished us to recognize that the possession of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1247.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1245. St Michael’s typikon (*BMFD*, 1216) describes this “unexpected event which astounded all who heard and learned of it . . . the recovery of the famous, the very queen of cities from Italian tyranny, its freedom and redemption from the yoke of slavery.” The text continues: “this great city of Constantine, clothed like a queen in its ancient and splendid raiment, the New Jerusalem, built as a city.” The paragraph concludes: “it is not the confused accents of a half-barbarian people [that one hears], but that of the native inhabitants, all of them clearly and precisely articulating the polished Greek tongue and correctly pronouncing it.”

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1230.

the City is a grace that depends only on his bounty. He has reserved this to our reign through his grace, which obliges us to an eternal appreciation – and, in according it to us, he makes us hope that with Constantinople we may retake the provinces that were lost with it.”²² The cleansing of sin is thus linked to a restoration not only of the imperial capital but also to a larger expansionist agenda.²³

The centerpiece of Michael’s restoration campaign was the Great Church, which figured prominently in his 1261 *adventus* and his larger agenda of renewal. After passing through the Golden Gate, the emperor proceeded on foot as far as the Stoudios Monastery, where he left the icon of the Virgin, then rode on horseback to the center of the city, to Hagia Sophia. There at “the shrine of the Wisdom of God,” according to Akropolites, “he paid reverence to the Lord Christ, and when he had given Him due thanks he arrived at the Great Palace.”²⁴ The ritual cycle of prayer and prostration before the ceremonial entrance to the city described in the Introduction to Part I thus concluded with thanksgiving in the sacred heart of the city.²⁵

A chrysobull outlines the significant gifts and privileges Michael offered to the Great Church, and also conveys similar themes to the monastic typika regarding the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople.²⁶ Explicitly equating Constantinople with Zion, the text opens by drawing an analogy between the Byzantine return to Constantinople and the Israelite return from Babylonian exile.²⁷ Michael is further characterized as instrumental in the restoration of

²² Pachymeres, *De Michaelē et Andronico Palaeologis* (Bonn, 1835), I, 153–5, translation adapted from Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, 36–7.

²³ The aim of recovery and expansion is echoed in the chrysobull to Hagia Sophia discussed below, 96.

²⁴ Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 384.

²⁵ It was here at the Great Church that the emperor was crowned again along with his son Andronikos, thus firmly establishing his dynasty at the exclusion of the Laskarids, and consequently inciting rage of Patriarch Arsenios, as will be discussed further below. The coronation issues are complicated. See F. Dölger, “Die dynastische Familienpolitik des Kaisers Michael Palaiologos (1258–1282)” in *Festschrift Eichman* (Paderborn, 1940), 179–90 [repr. *Paraspora*, 1961]; and Peter Wirth, “Die Begründung der Kaisermacht Michaels VIII. Palaiologos,” *JÖB*, 10 (1961), 85–91.

²⁶ See Deno J. Geanakoplos, “The Byzantine Recovery of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261: A Chrysobull of Michael VIII Palaeologus in Favor of Hagia Sophia” in F. F. Church and T. George (eds.), *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Essays Presented to George Huntston Williams on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Leiden, 1979), repr. *Constantinople and the West*, 173–88. Talbot, “Restoration,” 251–2; Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*, 121–5. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler ed.), I 233: 6–15, describes the renovations to the Great Church, undoing the damage of the “Italians” in preparation for Michael’s coronation.

²⁷ The text opens (Geanakoplos, “The Byzantine Recovery,” 174) as follows: “Hail Daughter of Zion . . . the Lord has redeemed you from your sins,” and continues “The city has been

the city and the re-installment of patriarchal properties seized by the Latin Church in 1204. According to the chrysobull, "Our Majesty has decided to spur on this renewal and restore not only the buildings of this New Zion, not only His church and the sacred vessels and holy objects but also the estates and properties from which the yearly revenue is drawn for the sake of the things of God."²⁸ Like Gregoras's account, the text speaks of a return to order, in this instance ecclesiastical and institutional order. The restoration of order is contrasted with the sin and disorder of the past, not just the treachery of the Italians but an even earlier and native sin: "The inhabitants of Constantinople fled from their *patris* into exile, and the cup which was allotted them to drink was overflowing as penalty for their sins, and the bitterness was emptied like water into their entrails."²⁹ For the return of order, expiation was necessary and, significantly, it was made manifest through a return gift:

by the will of the Almighty, our Majesty entered Constantinople from which the Romans had been expelled because of their sins, and to which the mercy of God brought them back. And Our Majesty took care, first and above all else, to render to God on this occasion of the restoration of the Romans, the first fruits of the return of the Romans to their ancestral lands.³⁰

Just as the Jews offered to the Temple the first fruits of their crops,³¹ Michael restored order by restoring to the Great Church its dependencies, not only the buildings in the immediate vicinity of Hagia Sophia, such as those in the area of the Augusteion, Milion, and Hagia Eirene, but also those in Asia Minor, near Smyrna.³²

In addition to awarding properties, endowing precious liturgical vessels, and ensuring necessary physical restorations to the structure of the Great Church, Michael in all likelihood also commissioned the great Deesis mosaic still standing in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia as a

delivered, not as were the Jews long ago from the hands of the Babylonians, but from the contemptible Italians whose *ethnos* is worse than the Babylonian serpent" (175). Relevant to the discussion is Paul Alexander, "The Strength of Empire and Capital as Seen through Byzantine Eyes," *Speculum*, 37(3) (1962), 339–57 [repr. *Religious and Political History and Thought in the Byzantine Empire* (London, 1978) article II]. See also the introduction to Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson (eds.), *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington DC, 2010), 25–7.

²⁸ Geanakoplos, "The Byzantine Recovery," 175. ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 179. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

³¹ For an interpretation of the tithe in terms of the anthropology of gift exchange, see Menahem Herman, "Tithe as Gift: The Biblical Institution in Light of Mauss's 'Prestation Theory,'" *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, 18(1) (1993), 51–73.

³² The properties are studied by Hélène Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081–1317) particulièrement au XIII^e siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires*, I (1965), 1–204.

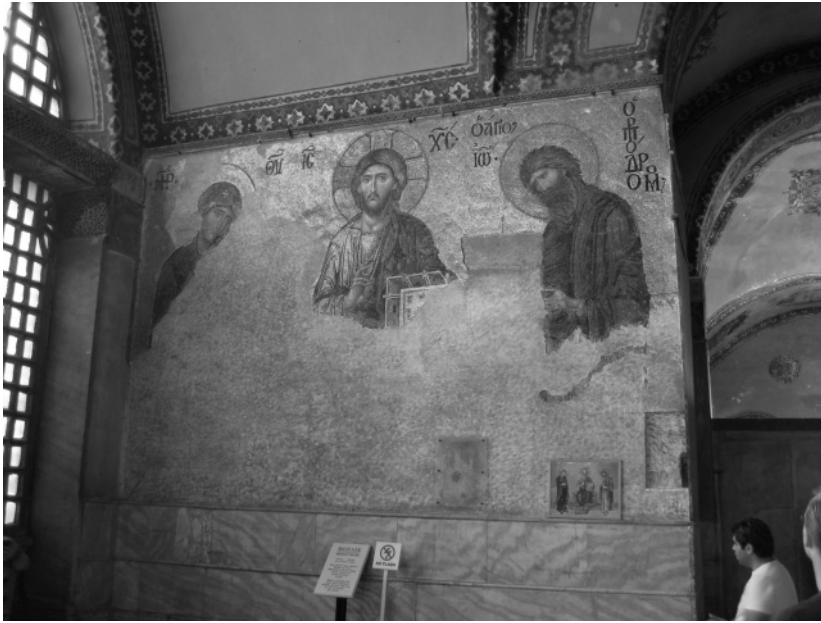


Figure 2.1 Deesis, mosaic in the south gallery, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, thirteenth century

visualization of thanksgiving for the restoration, as Robin Cormack has proposed (Figure 2.1).³³ The panel certainly accords well with what we know about imperial patronage in his newly restored imperial city. Its position in the eastern area of the south gallery near to the mosaics of his Middle Byzantine imperial predecessors offering gifts to the church (Figures 0.1–0.3) suggests a continuity and genealogy of the imperial office. This was a central concern of the first Palaiologoi. At the same time, the panel departs significantly in tone, scale, and iconography from the earlier mosaics.³⁴ The expressive qualities of the mosaic are unparalleled, signaling to scholars a formal affinity with contemporary works of art created in Italy. The figures are rendered larger than life but are far from imposing, the sensitive treatment of the facial features of the Virgin, Christ, and the Prothodromos being ideally suited to the message of the iconography of the Deesis: petition and entreaty, a more somber message for a new empire.³⁵

³³ Robin Cormack, “The Mother of God in the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople” in Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God*, 119–22; and Cormack, “Interpreting the Mosaics,” 145–6.

³⁴ Kalopissi-Verti, “Patronage and Artistic Production,” 76, characterizes the style as archaizing, noting that it revives the artistic modes of his ancestors.

³⁵ On the iconography of the Deësis, see Annemarie Weyl Carr, “Deesis,” *ODB*; Anthony Cutler, “Under the Sign of Deesis: On the Question of Representativeness in Medieval Art and

The Deesis mosaic's combination of monumental scale, sensitive style, and emotive message of entreaty expresses a new tone in imperial commissions of the early Palaiologan period. Although the precise circumstances of its commission remain elusive, it should be recognized as the first monumental mosaic installed in the Great Church following the return of the city to Byzantine rule.³⁶ As such, the new tone is significant. As opposed to the previous mosaics of imperial munificence in the south gallery, which commemorate the emperors' generosity by depicting the annual imperial monetary donation to Hagia Sophia literally as a purse of money in their hands, the Palaiologan mosaic showcases sacred rather than imperial figures in the service of an open-ended petition or prayer conveyed in monumental scale yet intimate in tone. Especially seen against the textual backdrop of sin and expiation evoked in Michael's chrysobull to the Great Church, it is significant that the first image installed in the south gallery following the Byzantine restoration stresses entreaty and intercession, and this new emphasis is ideally suited to the circumstances of the early Palaiologoi.

In the Mount Auxentios typikon, Michael asks: "how could I even briefly manage to acknowledge God's favor or even apportion some tiny recompense to him who had presented me with so many great and magnificent benefactions?"³⁷ His answer is to offer his munificence to the monastic community: "what one offers to God's genuine worshippers, he in his great goodness makes his own, and the honor shown to them is ascribed to him." To fund the monastery is to give thanks to God for the invaluable and

Literature," *DOP*, 41 (1987), 145–54; Thomas von Bogyay, "Deesis und Eschatologie" in Peter Wirth (ed.), *Polychordia, Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag* (Amsterdam, 1967), II, 59–72; C. Walter, "Two Notes on the Deësis," *REB*, 26 (1968), 311–16, and "Further Notes on the Deësis," *REB*, 28 (1970), 161–87 (both repr. *Studies in Byzantine Iconography*, 1977); Ioanna Zervou Tognazzi, "Δεήσις. Interpretazione del termine e sua presenza nell'iconographia bizantina," *Milion* (1990), 391–416. These studies should be complemented by the essay by Ruth Macrides, "The Ritual of Petition" in P. Roilos and D. Yatromanolakis (eds.), *Greek Ritual Poetics* (Cambridge, 2004), 356–70, which traces the role of "the one in charge of the petitions" (ἐπὶ τῶν δεήσεων). Deesis, she notes (at 357), "provides the link between liturgical petition and petitioning the emperor" and becomes an elaborate component of rhetoric in the twelfth century. With this in mind, the iconography of the Deesis panel comes into sharper focus as the first monumental mosaic image installed in the Great Church since the restoration of Constantinople. For a recent study of the reconfiguration of the Byzantine deesis in the West, see Sean Gilsdorf, "Deesis Deconstructed: Imagining Intercession in the Medieval West," *Viator*, 43(1) (2012), 131–74.

³⁶ At present, evidence is insufficient to ascribe to the commission a specific historic moment and motivation such as Michael's coronation. Cf. Robin Cormack, "... and the Word was God: Art and Orthodoxy in Late Byzantium" in Andrew Louth and Augustine Casiday (eds.), *Byzantine Orthodoxies* (Aldershot, 2006), 111–20; "Interpreting the Mosaics," 46; and "Mother of God," 120.

³⁷ *BMFD*, 1217.

innumerable favors he has received. This emphasis on thanksgiving more than expectation of future benefit marks a profound shift in Byzantine attitudes toward donation in the early Palaiologan period, as most recently elucidated by Nancy Ševčenko.³⁸ Rather than expectation about rewards in the afterlife, for example, typika of the period stress the repayment of great debt already received and spiritual protection. This emphasis on thanksgiving, I propose, extends beyond the realm of monastic donation and inflects the reconfiguration of the early Palaiologan imperial image.

A New Constantine for the capital of a new empire

Texts stress the divinely sanctioned nature not only of the restoration of Byzantine Constantinople but also of Michael's rise to power. The two are deeply intertwined in that the return to Constantinople serves as validation for Palaiologan rule. To emphasize Michael's role in (re)founding the imperial city – again, as the instrument of divine plan – an association with Constantine the Great was cultivated in the service of a new imperial image for the renewed city and empire. The inscription on the obverse of a lead seal in the Numismatic Museum in Athens, for example, links the emperor explicitly to the city's first founder by describing him as “Michael, in Christ the Lord, Faithful Emperor and Autokrator of the Romans, Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos and New Constantine” (Figure 2.2).³⁹ A concern with tradition and imperial pedigree is evident in the Byzantine emperor's traditional title, Emperor of the Romans, and in his nomenclature, which suggests genealogical descent from three illustrious imperial families of the past – the Doukai, Angeloi, and Komnenoi – as well as symbolic descent

³⁸ Nancy Ševčenko, “The Portrait of Theodore Metochites at Chora” in Jean-Michel Spieser and Élisabeth Yota (eds.), *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin* (Paris, 2012), 189–201. I thank the author for generously sharing this work with me in advance of its publication. She also invokes the typikon of Theodora Synadene, niece of Michael VIII, for the Bebaia Elpis monastery in this regard. For related themes in the Komnenian period, see Victoria Kepetzi, “Empereur, piété et remission des péchés dans deux *ekphraseis* byzantines. Image et rhétorique,” *ΔΧΑΕ*, 20 (1999), 231–44.

³⁹ *BFP*, 31–2 (cat. no. 6): ΜΙ / ΕΝ ΧΩ ΤΩ ΘΩ / ΠΙCΤΟC / ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΚΑΙ ΑΥ/[Τ]ΟΚΡΑΤ/[Ω]Ρ ΡΩ/ΜΕΩΝ [ΔΟΥ]Κ/[ΑC] . . . ΑΓΓ/ΕΛΟC / ΚΟΜΝ[Η]/ΝΟC Ο Π/ΑΛΛΑΙΟ/ΛΟΓΟC / ΚΑΙ Ν/ΕΟC Κ/ΩΝCΤ[Α]/ΝΤΙ[Ν]/[ΟC]. See Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 23; Chara Constantinidi, “Ἡ Παναγία τῶν Βλαχερνῶν ὡς ἐχέγγυο τῆς Δικαιοσύνης· ἡ σφραγίδα τοῦ Σεκρέτου μέ τόν Μιχαήλ Η΄ Παλαιολόγο καί ο Μιχαήλ Κακός Σεναχηρίμ,” *ΔΧΑΕ*, 27 (2006), 445–54; and Yorta Nikolaou, “Το θαῦμα τῶν Βασιλέων καί ἡ Δίκη τοῦ Σεκρέτου: Μία Μοναδική Αυτοκρατορική Βούλλα ἀπό τίς Συλλογές τοῦ Νομισματικοῦ Μουσείου” in Kermatia Filias, *Festschrift for Ioannis Touratsoglou*, I (Athens, 2009), 593–603.



Figure 2.2 Lead seal of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Seal of the Sekreton (NM 2032/1998), 1261–2, Numismatic Museum, Athens

from the first founder of Constantinople. Michael was hailed explicitly as New Constantine in an impressive array of genres, ranging from diplomatic correspondence, court oratory, seals such as this, and inscriptions on both portable arts and monumental programs.⁴⁰ In Nicaea, an image of the emperor of the Greeks on the *peplos* sent to Genoa indexes a series of related intellectual concerns of his empire in exile, as described in Chapter 1. With the reclaiming of Constantinople, however, Michael cultivated an association with the Roman emperor who founded New Rome. He was not the first Byzantine emperor to draw this analogy, but, as Ruth Macrides reminds us, given the circumstances of the Latin conquest and occupation of the imperial capital, Constantine the Great offered the most cogent imperial model

⁴⁰ Michael was described as New Constantine as early as 1262 in a letter sent to Genoa, on which see Belgrano, “Cinque Documenti,” 227. On Michael’s adoption of the New Constantine epithet, see Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 23 n. 55; Macrides, “From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi,” 269–82; Talbot, “Restoration,” 260; M. Gallina, “Novus Constantinus – Νέος Κωνσταντῖνος: Temi di memoria costantiniana nella propaganda imperiale a Bisanzio,” *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia*, 27 (1994), 33–56, especially 53–5; and Puech, “Refondation,” 350–62. The New Constantine epithet is found in documents as well as major artistic programs. For a succinct survey, see Heide Buschhausen and Helmut Buschhausen, *Die Marienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien: Byzantiner, Normannen und Serben im Kampf um die Via Egnatia* (Vienna, 1976), 153–4. See also Vojislav Durić, “Le nouveau Constantin dans l’art serbe médiéval” in Birgitt Borkopp and Thomas Steppan (eds.), *Λιθόστροφον: Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte: Festschrift für Marcell Restle* (Stuttgart, 2000), 54–65.

to express Michael's triumphant reconquest of the city.⁴¹ Use of this epithet provided a tangible expression of Michael's restoration: it served as a reminder of his association with the city and its imperial legacy, and in so doing it forged an imperial image rooted in continuity and genealogy. This was a critical message, for, despite the illustrious families from which he claimed descent, Michael Palaiologos was, again, a usurper. Given the circumstances of his rise to power, it should come as no surprise that Michael exploited associations with Constantine the Great after 1261.

Beyond celebrating his ties to historic dynasties that ruled Constantinople before the Latin occupation, the seal in Athens distinguishes Michael's rule as one of renewal, not only through inscription but also through imagery. Standing frontally and hieratically at the center of the seal, the emperor is depicted holding above him an icon of the Virgin, creating a vertical axis of imperial and sacred authority. Generally associated with Michael's triumphal 1261 *adventus* described earlier, the image visually echoes his dramatic entry into the city bearing the Virgin's sacred icon, but the seal's particular reference is to the re-establishment of the office of the imperial *sekreton*, the supreme judicial tribunal, which had ceased to exist during the Latin occupation. The inscription on the reverse explicitly refers to the reactivation of the *sekreton* by the emperor.⁴² The icon in his hands serves as a guarantee of the justice and authority that is reinstated with his reconquest of Constantinople. The emperor's exercise of authority, moreover, is portrayed as active, and he holds the sacred icon in his hands above him as a contiguous extension of the imperial body. The visual configuration and inscription of the seal expresses the divinely sanctioned nature of the emperor's restoration of the imperial city and its key institutions.⁴³

⁴¹ Macrides, "From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi," 274: "The Comnenian *renovatio* was not conducted in the name of Constantine. This element was added for Michael VIII because of the specific circumstances of 1261."

⁴² The inscription on the reverse of the lead seal (*BFP*, 31) reads: "The immediate punishment and the judgment of offense are for those who violate the decisions of the *sekreton*, which, after being gagged for a time, is now strengthened by Michael, the wonder of Emperors." The fact that the icon depicted on the seal is of the Blachernitissa and not Hodegetria Virgin (which he carried at his *adventus*) is explained by Yotka Nikolaou in the *BFP* catalogue as an attempt to associate the newly re-established office of the *sekreton* with the imperial palace and the Blachernai. For Constantinidi, "Ἡ Παναγία τῶν Βλαχερνῶν," the Blachernitissa relates to divinely guaranteed justice. See also A. Kazhdan, "Seckreton," *ODB*.

⁴³ The emperor's responsibility to administer justice was part of the program of *taxis*. The reinstating of the *sekreton* should be seen as part of the cleansing of the disorder of the city. See Ludwig Burgmann and Paul Magdalino, "Michael VIII on Maladministration: An Unpublished Novel of the Early Palaiologan Period," *Fontes Minores*, IV (1984), 377–90 in relation to this period directly; and Gilbert Dagron, "Lawful Society and Legitimate Power:



Figure 2.3a Kastoria, Panagia Mavriotissa, external view

While the New Constantine epithet on the seal relates to the renewal of justice after the chaos of the interregnum, the same epithet outside of Constantinople in the recently recovered northwestern provinces signals a desired allegiance to the imperial capital in an attempt to consolidate the fractured empire. The exterior of the katholikon of the monastery of the Mavriotissa near Kastoria preserves an extremely fragmentary fresco of the Tree of Jesse with military saints and imperial effigies, which have been identified as Michael Palaiologos and Alexios I Komnenos, founders of the Palaiologan and Komnenian dynasties (Figure 2.3a–b). According to Titos Papamastorakis, the combination of these figures and their proximity to the Tree of Jesse expressed a powerful statement in support of the legitimacy of the throne that Michael usurped by stressing his imperial ties to the previous preconquest imperial dynasty. The author also argues that the partially preserved inscription identifying the Palaiologan emperor originally included the New Constantine epithet.⁴⁴ The visual program thus combines two different references to the past in order to celebrate Michael

“Εννομος πολιτεία, ἔννομος ἀρχή” in Laiou and Simon (eds.), *Law and Society in Byzantium*, 27–51, on the larger issues of sovereignty at stake.

⁴⁴ Papamastorakis, “Ενα εικαστικό,” 221–40, reconstructs the inscription as follows: [ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΠΙΣΤΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΟC ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟC ΚΟΜ]ΝΙΝΟC ΔΟΥΚΑC Ο ΠΑΛΑΙ[ΟΛΟ]ΓΟC. See also discussion and color plates in M. Chatzidakis and Stylianos Pelekanides (eds.), *Kastoria* (Athens, 1985), 66–83. The epithet is further attested, but without extant imagery, in an inscription at the church of St Nicolas near Monastir dated to 1271 (not 1371; cf. P. Miljković-Peppek, “Le portrait de

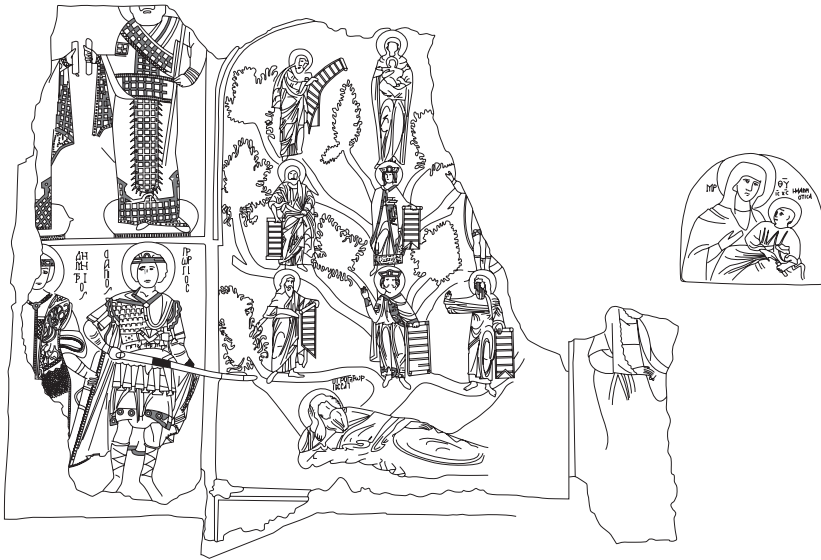


Figure 2.3b Kastoria, Panagia Mavriotissa, line drawing

as not only the refounder of the imperial city of Constantine but also as the legitimate continuation of the imperial line, despite crusader conquests and usurpation. To be clear, the program constitutes a visual encomium to the new Palaiologan emperor that stresses a genealogical link both to the founder of the imperial city and to the founder of the last dynasty to rule that city before the Fourth Crusade. Through alignment with these previous emperors, the fresco situates Michael as their legitimate extension while simultaneously stressing his status as the representative of the new dynasty and new empire, which included the northwestern territories.

We encounter a similar emphasis on continuity in the service of present and future legitimacy at the Church of the Virgin at Apollonia, a Komnenian monastic foundation on the Adriatic Coast in Albania with a portrait of the first Palaiologan family on the east wall of the exonarthex (Figure 2.4a–b).⁴⁵ Here the message of genealogy is signaled not by the Tree of Jesse

l'empereur byzantin Michel VIII à l'église rupestre de Saint-Érasme près d'Ohrid," CA, 45 (1997), 169).

⁴⁵ Buschhausen and Buschhausen, *Die Marienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien*, 143–82, especially 153–4, figs. 16–19. Note that the emperor is not depicted on knee in front of the Virgin in this image as claimed by Velmans, "Le portrait," 97 and n. 14. See also, more recently, Anna Christidou, "Ερευνώντας την ιστορία μέσα από άγνωστα βυζαντινά αυτοκρατορικά πορτρέτα σε εκκλησίες της Αλβανίας" in *ΑΝΤΑΠΟΔΟΣΗ: Μελέτες βυζαντινής και μεταβυζαντινής αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης προς τιμήν της καθηγήτριας Ελένης Δεληγιάννη-Δωρή* (Athens, 2010), 537–63; and Christidou's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Unknown Byzantine Art in the Balkan Area: Art, Power and Patronage in Twelfth to Fourteenth-Century Churches in Albania



Figure 2.4a Church of the Virgin, Apollonia (Albania), thirteenth century



Figure 2.4b Church of the Virgin, Apollonia (Albania), line drawing, thirteenth century

iconography, with its obvious genealogical symbolism, but by donation. In this severely damaged fresco, the Palaiologan emperor is described by inscription as the New Constantine with a similar elaboration of his imperial familial descent as on the seal of the sekreton. But it also hails him as the true lover of Christ and monasticism, an allusion to the monastic privileges originally granted to the monastery by Manuel I Komnenos.⁴⁶

(London, 2011), I, 142–61, especially 151–61 for the imperial portrait. I would like to thank the author for sharing both these works with me.

⁴⁶ Buschhausen and Buschhausen, *Die Marienkirche von Apollonia in Albanien*, 146–7: [Μιχαὴλ ἐν Χριστῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς] καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ ῥωμαιοῦν] νέος Κωνσταντῖνος Κομνηνὸς Δούκας Ἄγγελος ὁ Παλαιολόγος ὁ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόχριστος καὶ φιλομόναχος (“Michael, in Christ

In addition to the fragmentary identifying inscriptions, the composition also includes an inscription that has been identified by the Buschhausens as a copy of the text of a chrysobull issued by the Palaiologan emperor for the monastery.⁴⁷ Through reference to Michael's support of monasticism, both in his description and in the invocation of the text of his chrysobull, the composition weaves together the Komnenian and Palaiologan rulers through their acts of generosity to the monastery.⁴⁸

In visual terms, the emperor at Apollonia is pictured at the center of a symbolic gift exchange involving sacred, imperial, and monastic protection, thanksgiving, and genealogy. Michael, his wife Theodora, and their son Andronikos, all with halos, are situated on the left side of the fresco, where they represent the present and future of Palaiologan Constantinople.⁴⁹ On the right, the Virgin is pictured presenting to the emperor a micro-architectural model of the church with one hand, while the other hovers over the shoulder of another figure, poorly preserved but much smaller in scale and lacking a halo. Behind the Virgin stands another figure, severely damaged but with traces of a halo visible.⁵⁰ The precise point of contact between these two groups is extremely damaged, but it is likely that the emperor is shown handing the chrysobull to the smaller figure in the foreground of the composition. If we follow this reconstruction, the

the Lord faithful emperor and autokrator of the Romans new Constantine Komnenos Doukas Angelos Palaeologos and true lover of Christ and monasticism"). On the Seal of the Sekreton – and on the *peplos* in Genoa – he is described as Doukas, Angelos, Komnenos, Palaiologos – that is, his patronymics are laid out chronologically, whereas at Apollonia, precedence is given to his Komnenian lineage.

⁴⁷ In Buschhausen and Buschhausen (*ibid.*, 162–4), the authors propose that the fresco was based on a lost chrysobull for the monastery and that the text on the right half of the composition replicates the text of the chrysobull. On the monumentalization and remediation of chrysobull texts, see note 15 in the Introduction. The fresco is generally associated with the Battle of Berat in 1281, depictions of which were also painted in the palace in Constantinople – see note 82 below. On the context for the Battle of Berat, see Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West*, 305–34; and Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 58–71. Christidou, "Unknown Byzantine Art in the Balkan Area," proposes a possible earlier date, in part because of the image's association with the chrysobull issued for the monastery.

⁴⁸ Similarly, the rock-cut church of St Erasmus near Ohrid creates a sense of allegiance by positioning the portrait of emperor, primarily identified by comparison with the Apollonia frescoes, alongside St Erasmus. Miljković-Peppek, "Le portrait de l'empereur byzantin Michel VIII," 169–177, suggests the frescoes were installed between 1275 and 1280.

⁴⁹ As Christidou, "Unknown Byzantine Art," 147, has proposed, the imperial dress at Apollonia is more in line with Komnenian precedents than contemporary trends, hence underscoring the message of continuity.

⁵⁰ Although the traces of six figures are visible today, descriptions from the nineteenth century claim that another two were present. See discussion in Christidou, "Unknown Byzantine Art," 145–51.

fresco represents the emperor confirming the privileges to the monastery. In this regard, it functions as a monumental chrysobull affirming imperial power through patronage to the monastery. The image, according to this logic, acts as a commemoration of imperial generosity, portraying the emperor as benefactor and protector of the monastery, again re-establishing the imperial munificence that was instituted in the twelfth century. Significantly, this vision of imperial generosity transpires in the presence of the future of Byzantium, Andronikos.⁵¹ It thus evokes the genealogy of imperial munificence while simultaneously gesturing toward the future and thus underscores dynastic legitimacy.

At Apollonia, the New Constantine epithet is employed in the service of conveying allegiance to Michael and, by extension, to restored imperial Constantinople. The imperial portraits at both Kastoria and Apollonia project an image of Michael as the representative of the imperial capital to local communities of the recently recovered provinces of the northwest.⁵² Their message of imperial genealogy presents the Palaiologoi as heirs of the prequest past and they thus provide justification for their present and future rule. Regarding extant fresco programs in churches in Macedonia and along the Adriatic coast, Sophia Kalopissi-Verti proposes that Michael's patronage relates to the larger ideology of restoration in the northwestern provinces and in particular to the "ecumenical character" of the empire.⁵³ In addition to ecumenicism, however, these images stress the new Byzantine capital headed by Michael as the New Constantine and hence chart the ambitions of his imperial agenda.

In the restored empire's capital, too, the emperor was represented as a New Constantine for related but more specific ends. Again, the seal of the *sekreton* employs the New Constantine epithet specifically to stress institutional – and judicial – renewal (Figure 2.2). Here the nomenclature, the New Constantine epithet, and the visual contiguity of imperial body and

⁵¹ The Mount Auxentios typikon includes an allocution to future rulers (*BMFD*, 1230–32) to stress that Michael's monastic patronage should be continued by his successors. The inclusion of Andronikos may evoke this concern as well.

⁵² Generally, the inclusion of imperial references in donor epigrams and images is taken to be an "expression of political allegiance and other ties which bound the patrons to central authority" in the words of Vassiliki Foskolou, "In the Reign of the Emperor of Rome . . .": Donor Inscriptions and Political Ideology in the Time of Michael VIII Paleologos," *ΔΧΑΕ*, 27 (2006), 455, who presents a more nuanced relationship between the local and imperial on the basis of epigraphic evidence.

⁵³ Kalopissi-Verti, "Patronage and Artistic Production," 77. See also Foskolou, "In the Reign of the Emperor of Rome . . .," 455–61; Christidou, "Ερευνώντας την ιστορία," 537–63; and Part II of Christidou, "Unknown Byzantine Art in the Balkan Area."

icon of the Virgin on the obverse parallels the inscription on the reverse to commemorate the re-opening of the sekreton and to celebrate the emperor in his renewed exercise of order and justice.

In other instances in Constantinople, the promotion of Michael as a New Constantine is embroiled in patriarchal politics. According to Pachymeres, Patriarch Germanos III commissioned a *peplos* depicting the emperor to be hung between porphyry columns at the west end of Hagia Sophia. This purple *peplos*, embroidered with gold thread, displayed Michael as a New Constantine.⁵⁴ Exactly how this no-longer-extant textile did so remains unclear, but we can assume that, at the very least, an inscription rendered the association with the city's first imperial founder explicit. Such a *peplos*, Macrides insists, aimed at advertising the epithet in Constantinople: it was created and displayed so as to present the Palaiologan New Constantine to the Roman people.⁵⁵ This New Constantine *peplos*, as we will see toward the end of the chapter, was part of a more elaborate exchange of textile gifts between the emperor and patriarch, an exchange related to the tensions surrounding the emperor's excommunication.

Like the silk hanging in Hagia Sophia, we know of another lost monument, not of silk but of bronze, that publicly proclaimed the first Palaiologan emperor as a New Constantine, but did so in visual rather than textual terms.⁵⁶ This bronze monument was erected in front of the Church of the

⁵⁴ Pachymeres, *De Michael et Andronico Paleologis* (Bekker, ed.), 614: B-16, reads as follows: στήλην δὲ βασιλείον ἐκ χρυσονήματος διεσκευασμένην κατ' ὄξυν πέπλον, ἣν ἐκεῖνος βασιλεὺς Μιχαὴλ πατριαρχεῦων ἀνήρτα τῶν πρὸς τῇ δύσει μέσον ἐρυθρῶν κιόνων, κατὰ τέτι κλείσμον τοῦ νέον ἐκεῖνον Κωνσταντῖνον φανῆναι Ῥωμαίοις. See Macrides, "The New Constantine," 22–5; Talbot, "Restoration," 251–2; and Papamastorakis, "Tampering with History," 207.

Pachymeres claims that it was Germanos who first called Michael by the New Constantine epithet – Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), II, 391.5–15. See Macrides, "The New Constantine," 24 n. 58; and Macrides, "From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi," 271.

⁵⁵ See Macrides, "The New Constantine," 24 n. 59.

⁵⁶ The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the lost bronze monument of Michael VIII. It should be noted that a number of other lost imperial images in early Palaiologan Constantinople are textually attested. Clavijo claims to have seen an imperial portrait at the Peribleptos Monastery, an earlier monastery restored by Michael VIII. M. de Montconys describes a fresco of the imperial couple in the refectory there, although there is some dispute about the identity of the imperial figures represented. On the Peribleptos, see Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*, 91–3; and Cyril A. Mango, "The Monastery of St. Mary Perivleptos (Sulu Manastir) at Constantinople Revisited," *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 23 (1992), 477–83.

Seventeenth-century engravings preserve a portrait of Michael VIII and Theodora and Constantine without Andronikos, although it is unclear what image they reproduce (i.e., a monumental program or an icon). See John Osborn, "New Evidence for a Lost Portrait of the Family of Michael VIII Palaiologos," *Thesaurismata*, 23 (1993), 9–13; Velmans, "Le portrait," 99; André Grabar, *Portraits oubliés d'empereurs byzantins in Recueil publié à l'occasion du*

Holy Apostles, Constantine's place of burial, thus drawing into analogy in locative terms the fourth- and thirteenth-century founders of the city.⁵⁷ While sources characterize Michael Palaiologos as the divine instrument in the return of Byzantine rule to Constantinople, he was in many ways like Constantine the Great founding a new city for a new empire. When Constantine first founded Constantinople in the fourth century, he erected a monumental porphyry column at the center of his forum that supported a sculpture of himself with glimmering bronze rays emanating from his head and holding an orb and spear in his hands. It is said that he also placed below that column the *palladium* of Rome, thus endowing the column with a sacral and protective aura and, significantly, conveying a sense of Constantinople as the New Rome.⁵⁸ Just as Constantine raised a monument proclaiming his city New Rome, Michael too had a monument erected to celebrate his renewed city and himself as its refounder. This monument also consisted of a colossal bronze statue atop a tall column, but its message was of an entirely different tenor: it represented two figures, and the dominant one was not the emperor but the Archangel Michael. This Palaiologan bronze monument, to which the remainder of the present chapter turns, positioned the imperial figure as secondary to a saintly figure – the emperor was situated as a supplicant at the feet of the Archangel Michael, offering him a model of the imperial city. Wholly original in conception, this early Palaiologan bronze monument adopts and adapts visual reference from throughout the city and the wider Byzantine repertoire in a startlingly original manner. For an emperor who rose to power through violence and spent most of his rule as an excommunicate excluded in part from the Great Church whose restoration he enabled, the bronze monument forged links to particular imperial images from the past in the service of a new icon of legitimate Palaiologan sovereignty in an era of contested imperium.

cent-cinquantiennaire de la société Nationale des Antiquaires de France, 1804–1954 (Paris, 1955) [repr. *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1968) I, 191–4]; Parani, *Reconstructing*, Appendix 2, no. 37; and R. H. W. Stichel, "'Vergessene Portraits,' Spätbyzantinischer Kaiser: Zwei Frühpalaiologische Kaiserliche Familienbildnisse im Perivleptos- und Pammakaristoskloster zu Konstantinopel," *Mitteilungen zur Spätantiken Archäologie und Byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte*, 1 (1998), 75–125.

⁵⁷ On the Church of the Holy Apostles in the Palaiologan period, see Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*, 99–103.

⁵⁸ While the sculpture no longer survives, the column still stands today in the Forum of Constantine (*çemberlitaş*). See Cyril A. Mango's work on the column reprinted as studies II, III, and IV in *Studies on Constantinople* (Aldershot, 1993) and, most recently, Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge, 2004), 192–204 with bibliography.

Brazen thanksgiving

While the monumental bronze sculptural group no longer survives, its location and appearance are attested by contemporary Byzantine historians as well as later foreign travelers to the city.⁵⁹ Pachymeres and Gregoras confirm the location of the bronze sculpture and describe its basic organization.⁶⁰ In the most detailed Greek description, Pachymeres asserts that it was “set up on a column-like pedestal and represents the Emperor Michael at the Archangel’s feet, offering to him the city which he holds [in his hands] and commending it to his protection.”⁶¹ From this succinct passage, we can envision the most salient features of the monumental sculptural group: the archangel and emperor were cast in a ritual gift exchange of the city founded by Constantine the Great and restored by Michael Palaiologos. The *terminus ante quem* for the monument’s commission is provided by the typikon for the monastery of St Michael on Mount Auxentios, which includes a brief dedicatory poem addressed to the archangel who, it claims, stands atop the column near the Church of the Holy Apostles.⁶² This reference also allows us to see the commission as part of the emperor’s larger restoration agenda and as integral to the economy of sacred transaction and patronage elucidated by the typika, as discussed above. Recall that the Auxentios monastery in its typikon is described as “down on its knees” and “raised up again” by Michael as “some small repayment to

⁵⁹ See Talbot, “Restoration,” who first offered a survey of the textual sources on the monument; Thomas Thomov, “The Last Column in Constantinople,” *BSI*, 59 (1998), 83; Jannic Durand, “À propos du grand groupe en bronze de l’archange saint Michel et de l’empereur Michel VIII Paléologue à Constantinople” in *La sculpture en occident: études offertes à Jean-René Gaborit* (Dijon, 2007), 47–57 (a source kindly brought to my attention by Alice-Mary Talbot); and Ševčenko, “The Portrait of Theodore Metochites.” Briefer mention of the monument is found in Grabar, *L’empereur*, 111, 178; Mango, “The Columns of Justinian and His Successors” in *Studies on Constantinople*, X, 12–14; Claudia Barsanti, “Costantinopoli e l’Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti,” *Rivista dell’Istituto nazionale d’archeologia e storia dell’arte*, 56 (2001), 129, and Puech, “Refondation,” 355–6.

⁶⁰ Both Gregoras and Pachymeres mention the monument in connection with the 1296 earthquake (more on this context at the end of the chapter). Antony Eastmond, “An Intentional Error? Imperial Art and ‘Mis’-Interpretation under Andronikos I Komnenos,” *ArtB*, 76(3) (1994), 502–10, has discussed the methodological ambiguities involved in interpreting lost monuments on the basis of textual attestation.

⁶¹ Cyril A. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 246. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), III, 261:1–5 reads as follows: ἐς πόδας δ’ ἔχων τὸν ἀνακτα Μιχαήλ, τὴν πόλιν φέροντα κάκεινῳ προσανατιθέντα καὶ τὴν ταύτης φυλακὴν ἐπιτρέποντα.

⁶² Talbot, “Restoration,” 258 with citation at n. 108 to P. N. Papageorgiu, “Zwei iambische Gedichte saec. XIV und XIII,” *BZ*, 8 (1899), 672–8, 676.54–5: πρὸς τοῦτο γὰρ σε καὶ κίων ὑψοῦ φέρει / ναῶ παρεστῶς τῶν σοφῶν Ἀποστόλων.

God” and “a small act of kindness to [his] ancestors” who founded the community.⁶³

Foreign travelers to the city located the bronze columnar monument at the Church of the Holy Apostles, but mistook the imperial figure as Constantine the Great – a confusion that underscores the success of the monument in conveying Michael Palaiologos as a New Constantine. For an anonymous fourteenth- to fifteenth-century Armenian pilgrim, the brazen image depicted Constantine and Gabriel, not the thirteenth-century emperor and his archangelic namesake.⁶⁴ The early fifteenth-century Russian deacon Zosima (1419–20) likewise understood the imperial figure to be the city’s first founder, but his account in other respects corresponds to the Byzantine description: “A terribly large angel stands on the column, holding the scepter of Constantinople in its hand. Emperor Constantine stands opposite it, holding Constantinople in his hands and offering it to the protection of the angel.”⁶⁵ Around the same time, the Florentine Cristoforo Buondelmonti visited the city and described the monument in nearly identical terms. He also identified the imperial figure at the summit of the column as Constantine offering the city held in his hand, but unlike the Russian visitor, the Florentine traveler expressly specifies his position as kneeling before the angel.⁶⁶

⁶³ See discussion above and *BMFD*, 1217. ⁶⁴ Talbot, “Restoration,” 258 n. 109.

⁶⁵ George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington DC, 1984), 184–6 and 306.

⁶⁶ Giuseppe Gerola, “Le vedute di Costantinopoli di Cristoforo Buondelmonti,” *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*, 3 (1931), 275–6: “Apud denique ecclesiam sanctorum Apostolorum quinta insultat columpna; quo in capite Angelus eneus est, et Constantinus genuflexus hanc urbem in manu sua offert.” Ševčenko, “The Portrait of Theodore Metochites,” also surveys these textual accounts with special attention to the positioning of the emperor on knee. On views of Constantinople in Buondelmonti’s *Liber insularum*, see Gerola, “Le vedute,” 247–79; Claudia Barsanti, “Un panorama di Costantinopoli dal ‘Liber insularum archipelagi’ di Cristoforo Buondelmonti” in Antonio Iacobini and Mauro Della Valle (eds.), *L’arte di Bisanzio e l’Italia al tempo dei Paleologi 1261–1453* (Rome, 1999), 35–54; Barsanti, “Costantinopoli,” 169–254; Hilary L. Turner, “Christopher Buondelmonti and the Isolaro,” *Terrae Incognitae*, 19 (1987), 11–28; Thomas Thomov, “New Information about Cristoforo Buondelmonti’s Drawings of Constantinople,” *Byzantion*, 66 (1996), 431–53; and Ian Manners, “Constructing the Image of a City: The Representation of Constantinople in Christopher Buondelmonti’s *Liber Insularum Archipelagi*,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87(1) (1997), 72–102. Most recently, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park, 2009), 145–77, has provided a sophisticated reading of Buondelmonti’s *Liber insularum* alongside other early modern representations of Constantinople with an eye to the ideology of anachronistically including both Byzantine and Ottoman monuments. In reading what are traditionally understood as draftsman “mistakes,” she writes (at 151): “these conflations constitute a discourse of ambiguity, as this representation of Ottoman Constantinople is marked with the persisting reminiscences of its former self.”

Buondelmonti traveled throughout the eastern Mediterranean composing his geographic and historic treatise, the *Liber insularum archipelagi*, which includes an entire final chapter devoted to Constantinople as well as a schematic representation of the city preserving the only visual trace of the lost bronze monument. In two copies of the *Liber insularum*, the view of Constantinople renders legible Michael's lost bronze sculpture among the city's famed monuments. In the upper-left corner of one of these justifiably famous cartographic scenes from the 1420s in Venice, one can make out the outline of a solitary kneeling figure facing east atop a masonry column, accompanied by a caption identifying him as Constantine "genuflexus" (Figures 2.5 and 2.6).⁶⁷ The figure's hands are outstretched in supplication, but little else can be discerned with clarity. The city view in a slightly later manuscript from c. 1450 follows this same configuration, but offers further details relating to the emperor's dress, including a crown with sharp projections (Figures 2.7 and 2.8).⁶⁸ Here the kneeling figure faces west and his hands are held together before him in a gesture of prayer rather than holding a city. Despite ambiguities about the precise appearance of the sculpture in these representations,⁶⁹ Buondelmonti's maps do provide a bird's-eye-view of the city mere decades before the Ottoman conquest (1453) and thus allow us to consider the relation of the monument to the topography of the city and the other imperial monuments that govern

⁶⁷ BFP, 400 (cat. no. 246). In many of the cityscapes, the monument is given the legend "hic Constantinus genuflexus," even when the sculpture is not represented.

⁶⁸ The provenance for this manuscript is complicated. In general it is listed as part of the Boies Penrose collection, housed in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (MS 4), having previously been owned by Sir Thomas Phillipps (as MS. 2634). See Baltimore Museum of Art, *The World Encompassed: An Exhibition of the History of Maps Held at the Baltimore Museum of Art* (Baltimore, 1952) (cat. no. 80); C. U. Faye, W. H. Bond, and S. de Ricci, *Supplement to the Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York, 1962); Barsanti, "Constantinopoli," 196–7. Since the 1970s, the manuscript has been in private collections. It was most recently owned by a Kenneth Nebenzahl, as correctly stated in the caption for figure two of Magdalino's essay in *EHB*, and was sold at Christie's in April 2012 to an unnamed private collector.

⁶⁹ To be clear, the images of the *Liber insularum* are more revealing about perceptions of Constantinople outside Constantinople than they are in relation to documenting the reality of the Byzantine city. The original copy, which was completed for Cardinal Giordano Orsini before 1420, is now lost, and most surviving copies of the book date to the latter half of the fifteenth century, after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans. While both images discussed here are dated to before the fall of the imperial city, they should not be considered eye-witness representations of the city, but rather copies and elaborations of a lost original manuscript. Cf. Manners, "Constructing the Image of a City." See also the insightful discussion in Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*. On the lost monumental map of Constantinople sent to the Lithuanian court, see the discussion in Chapter 5.

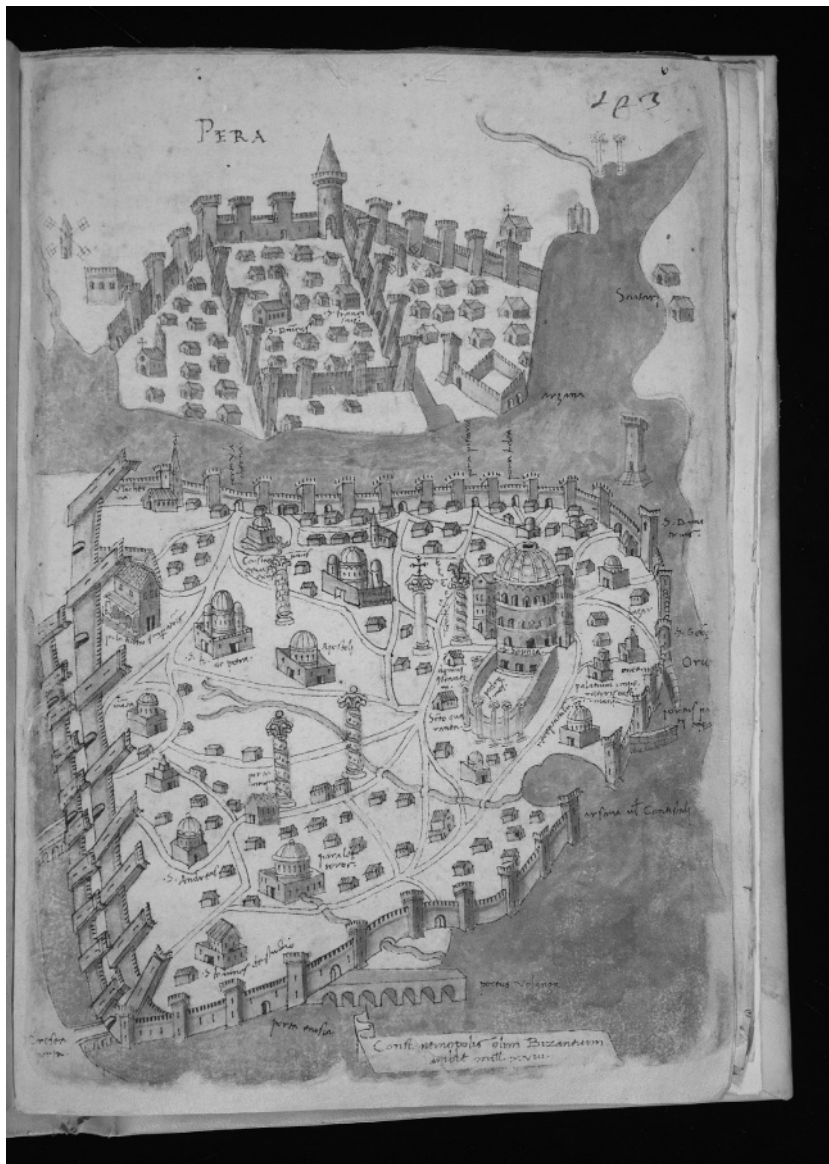


Figure 2.5 Constantinople, from Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber insularum archipelagi*, Venice, Marciana Library, Lat. XIV, 45 (=4595), fol. 123r

its terrain, in particular the honorific columns that punctuate the landscape as manifestations of imperial magnificence.

In both manuscripts' city views, a series of massive imperial monoliths dominates the page. Three are further adorned with sculpture at their summit. Michael's column and bronze sculpture at the Church of the Holy

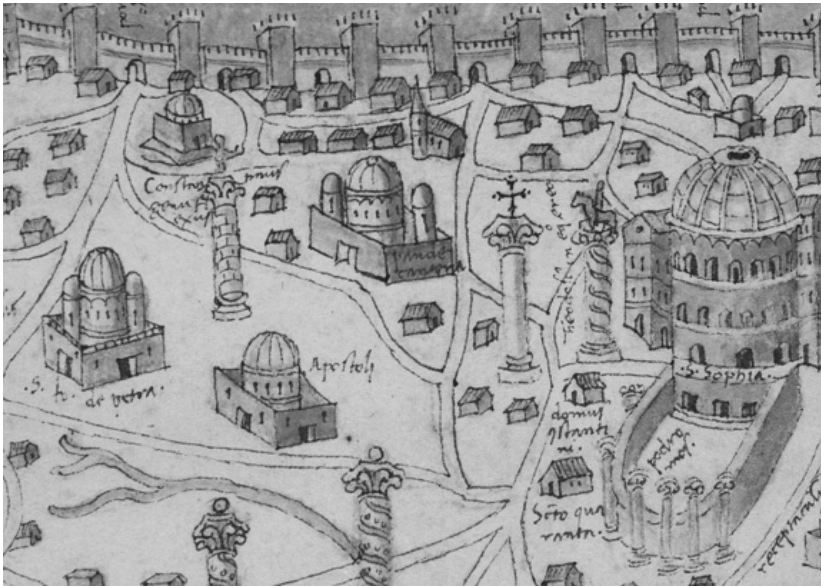


Figure 2.6 Detail of Constantinople, from Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber insularum archipelagi*, Venice, Marciana Library, Lat. XIV, 45 (=4595), fol. 123r

Apostles appears in the upper-left quadrant of the plan – again, the sculpture on top of the column is clearly indicated, but is not visually legible in any detailed manner. Further to the right, another column is crowned with a monumental cross. This is the great porphyry column of Constantine the Great in his forum, its larger-than-life imperial bronze sculpture replaced by a cross in the late twelfth century.⁷⁰ Beyond this, another great column supporting a clearly articulated equestrian statue stands directly in front of Hagia Sophia.⁷¹ This is the sixth-century bronze statue of Justinian I. Although it too no longer survives, it was still standing on the western end of the Great Church in the Augustaion when the Palaiologan monument was erected in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles in the thirteenth century, and the relationship between the two merits further elaboration for thinking about the city's monumental imperial image in these two distinct eras. They are the two columns in Buondelmonti's cityscapes to

⁷⁰ The great cross was placed at its summit during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos to replace the statue of the city's founder, which fell in a storm in 1106.

⁷¹ See Mango, "The Columns of Justinian"; and Jean-Pierre Sodini, "Images sculptées et propagande impériale du IV^e au VI^e siècle: recherches récentes sur les colonnes honorifiques et les reliefs politiques à Byzance" in Jannic Durand and André Guillou (eds.), *Byzance et les images* (Paris, 1994), 42–94.

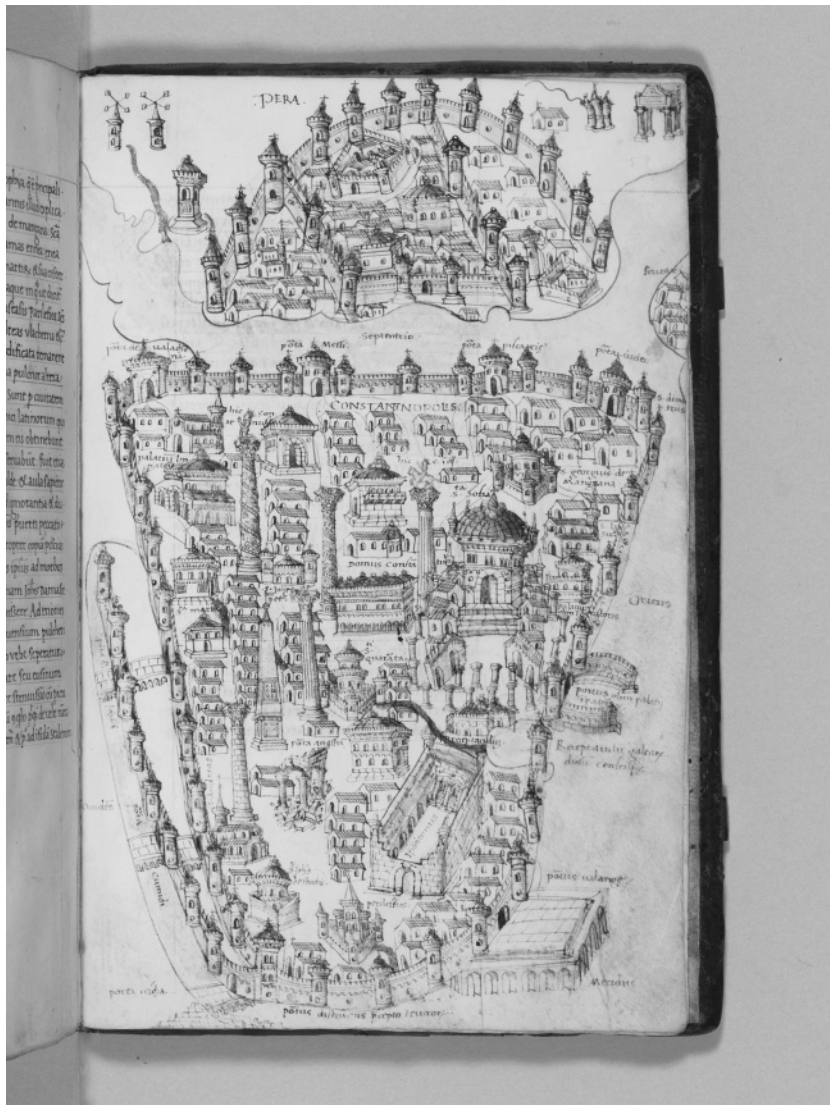


Figure 2.7 Constantinople, from Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber insularum archipelagi*, private collection

be elaborated with figurative sculpture. In the Marciana manuscript, both monuments are given a wash of ochre to suggest bronze, and in the slightly later copy, both imperial figures are represented wearing the same crown with distinctive projections.⁷²

⁷² In a Vatican manuscript (Ms. Rossiano 702 f. 32v), the top of the column at the Church of the Holy Apostles supports merely a large head of a king, but with the same distinctive crown. See Barsanti, "Costantinopoli," 203, fig. 78.



Figure 2.8 Detail of Constantinople, from Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber insularum archipelagi*, private collection

Justinian's celebrated sixth-century equestrian statue is elaborated in the greatest detail by early Byzantine historian Procopius, but is also described by later Byzantine historians Gregoras and Pachymeres. Despite the westward orientation on Buondelmonti's map (in the direction of the Church of the Holy Apostles), Procopius explains that Justinian's colossal mounted bronze image faced east – "he gazes towards the rising sun" – and that the emperor held in his hand an orb surmounted by a cross signifying his dominion.⁷³

⁷³ The equestrian monument is depicted in many copies of Buondelmonti's map and in most instances it faces east in accordance with the textual descriptions. It is visible in Hartmann Schedel's view of Constantinople from the *Liber chronicarum* from 1493, on which see BFP, 403–6 (cat. no. 28), despite the fact that it was no longer standing at that time. A drawing from the 1430s, today in Budapest, is generally thought to represent Justinian's lost monument, although various other proposals have been advanced. In one journal alone, the *Art Bulletin*, a

In his left hand he holds a globe, by which the sculptor has signified that the whole earth and sea were subject to him, yet he carries neither sword nor spear nor any other weapon, but a cross surmounts his globe, by virtue of which he alone has won the kingship and victory in war. Stretching forth his right hand towards the regions of the East and spreading out his fingers, he commands the barbarians that dwell there to remain at home and not advance any further.⁷⁴

The monument, in short, celebrates the far-reaching sway of Justinian's dominance: with the arresting gesture of one arm he keeps potential eastern threats at bay, while in his other he holds the *globus cruciger*,⁷⁵ symbolizing his dominion over the Christian world, the *oikoumene*. It matters little whether the monument originally celebrated Justinian's strength with regard to Persian aggressions specifically; the "barbarians" in the "regions of the East" could encompass any eastern enemy.⁷⁶ The ambiguity of the referent creates a timeless model capable of being reinterpreted for all emperors facing eastern threats – Sassanian, Arab, Seljuk, and Ottoman.⁷⁷ The commanding immobility of the emperor contrasts the potential for action of his mount, which appears "about to advance" and to press forward "vigorously," his legs positioned on the verge of motion.⁷⁸ The author describes

lively debate about the drawing was instigated by Phyllis Williams Lehmann, "Theodosius or Justinian? A Renaissance Drawing of a Byzantine Rider," *ArtB*, 41(1) (1959), 39–57, who proposed that the drawing represented a lost gold medallion of Theodosius II, a claim refuted by Cyril A. Mango, "Letters to the Editor," *ArtB*, 41(4) (1959), 351–6 [repr. as essay X in *Studies on Constantinople* as "Justinian's Equestrian Statue"], followed by a response from Lehmann printed directly after Mango's (at 356–8), and Michael Vickers contributed to the debate in "Theodosius, Justinian, or Heraclius?" *ArtB*, 58(2) (1976), 281–2. See Cyril A. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen, 1959), 174–9; Mango, "The Columns of Justinian," 1–8; Barsanti, "Constantinopoli," 215–19; Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 237–40; and the most thorough treatment by G. Prinzing, "Das Bild Justinians I. in der Überlieferung der Byzantiner vom 7. bis 15. Jahrhundert," *Fontes Minores*, 7 (1986), 6–14 with bibliography. On its afterlife, along with other prominent public monuments of Constantinople, see also Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror and the Equestrian Statue of the Augustaion," *Illinois Classical Studies*, 12(2) (1987), 305–13, and the discussion at the end of the chapter.

⁷⁴ Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 110–11.

⁷⁵ On the Globus Cruciger, see *DOC* IV/1, no. 168 and *DOC* V/1, no. 73.

⁷⁶ By contrast, the *Greek Anthology* describes another triumphal statue of Justinian in the Hippodrome marking the specific victory over Persians. *Anthol. Graeca*, XVI: 62–3 excerpted in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 117–18.

⁷⁷ On misinterpretations versus reinterpretations of Constantinople's statuary by native dwellers in the city, see Ruth Macrides, "Constantinople: The Crusaders' Gaze" in Ruth Macrides (ed.), *Travel in the Byzantine World* (Aldershot, 2002), 201–2. See also the end of this chapter for more on this.

⁷⁸ "The huge bronze horse . . . seems to be about to advance and to be vigorously pressing forward. Indeed, he lifts up his left front foot as if about to step on the ground before him, while the other is planted on the stone above which he stands as though to take the next step.

a pregnant moment with respect to the quadruped, but the emperor's pose seems permanently calm, his outstretched arm, with no need for a weapon, commanding respect. Further details of the emperor's military attire reinforce a sense of timelessness by evoking the heroic past: the colossal emperor was "clad like Achilles" wearing a cuirass of the "heroic fashion."

While Justinian's monument was still standing in the later Byzantine period, Pachymeres notes that by his day the ancient column had been stripped of its precious metal sheathing, presumably during the Fourth Crusade. His interpretation of the equestrian statue was guided by Procopius's text; he even uses the same word to describe the rider's garb ("Achilleian")⁷⁹ and echoes the earlier historian's interpretation of the rider as balancing military might with the power of the cross:

the right hand he holds upraised in a martial and courageous spirit as if he were severely threatening the enemy, except that this is not indicative of folly or senseless rashness. For the left hand removes such a grievous interpretation and justifies the man sufficiently. Indeed, he holds in it, at a short distance from his body, a gilded orb of brass upon which stands a cross made of the same material . . . The orb represents the world and it is by the power of the cross that he, the master of the whole earth, has been emboldened to grasp it.⁸⁰

Both early and later Byzantine historians associate the imperial rider with might and, specifically, with the ability to quell foreign aggression not through brute violence but by calm, divinely inspired strength. They each emphasize the emperor's role as protector of the city and by extension the whole *oikoumene*. While Justinian's early Byzantine Empire spread across Italy, North Africa, and the Levant, the message of the monument remained

The hind feet he draws together so as to have them in readiness when it is time to set them in motion." Translated in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 110.

⁷⁹ But Pachymeres lingers on the dress of the rider, in particular the helmet, while Procopius conveyed a sense of a plumed headdress with the utmost poetic economy by claiming that it "gives the impression of swaying" (Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 111). Pachymeres describes the helmet (*kranos*) as strange, extending upward from the brow and temples gradually "to a great [height] assuming the shape of golden feathers from the head." He then recounts that two of the feathers fell during his own day and were kept in the church's treasury. This description of the helmet of the Justinianic monument has sparked a surprising amount of scholarly attention. Regardless of whether we can identify the specific type of dress that Pachymeres is describing (through comparisons to textual sources), the author's lingering attention to the headdress may relate to the ever-increasing stratification of court dress in the later Byzantine period. Treating one of the feathers as a relic underscores the sacrality of the emperor's headgear, perhaps echoing the understanding of the emperor's crown as protected (*kekolumena*).

⁸⁰ Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 113. Note that Pachymeres acknowledges the possibility of imperial folly and rashness.

an ideal one for any Byzantine emperor in any era; it was a timeless image of imperial dominion and protection.

The prominence of Justinian's sixth-century equestrian monument and the thirteenth-century sculpture of Michael with the eponymous Archangel – their larger-than-life scale and bronze manufacture and their location in front of key sacro-imperial centers of Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Holy Apostles – distinguish them as being among the most significant public markers of imperial ideology standing in the later Byzantine capital.⁸¹ The difference in tone between these two lost monuments as they are described by Byzantine observers is telling.⁸² The equestrian format of Justinian's monument is well situated in the Roman and Byzantine repertoire for imperial portraiture.⁸³ Extant examples of triumphant imperial riders survive in early and middle Byzantine ivory and silk. The sixth-century Barberini ivory depicts an emperor on horseback, often identified as Justinian, with personifications of bounty supporting him and victory rushing to crown him, while barbarians present their tribute to him below (Figure 2.9).⁸⁴ Here the emperor is pictured as the recipient of tribute, victory, and bounty from vanquished barbarians, much like the base of

⁸¹ A comparison of the two may seem unfair, not least because they both survive in textual descriptions alone. Moreover, our descriptions of the later monument are so much shorter, preserving only the basic outlines of the composition without the same antique rhetorical flourishes or symbolic interpretations, whereas the earlier monument was celebrated far and wide, and its *ekphrasis* by Procopius was read by later historians. Still, the two monumental bronze works were standing in the thirteenth century in front of the main centers of sacro-imperial authority – Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Holy Apostles.

⁸² It is important to note that other works associated with Michael Palaiologos described by Pachymeres seem more in line with the victorious imperial ideology. For example, images of Michael's deeds were commissioned for the walls of the palace to represent his victory over the Angevins at Berat in Albania (1281). According to Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 246: "Wishing that these deeds be immortalized, he ordered them to be painted on the walls of the palace, and not only these, but also those that by God's grace had been accomplished from the beginning [of his reign]. The former were immediately painted in the vestibule, while the latter were not executed, the Emperor having died in the meantime." The visual memorialization of victories in the palace goes back to Justinian's campaign in Italy and reception of captives painted, in encaustic according to Procopius, on the ceiling of the imperial palace vestibule. See the description in Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 109–10.

⁸³ The second-century CE colossal bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius erected in Rome comes to mind most immediately.

⁸⁴ Similarly, a silk with an unnamed equestrian rider from one of the tombs in Bamberg Cathedral depicts an unnamed nimbate emperor on horseback framed on either side by *tychai* symbolizing cities; see Reinhold Baumstark (ed.), *Rom und Byzanz: Schatzkammerstücke aus bayerischen Sammlungen* (Munich, 1998), 213–14 (cat. no. 66). The identity of the emperor and event being commemorated is the subject of scholarly debate. See G. Prinzing, "Das Bamberger Gunthertuch in neuer Sicht," *BSI*, 54 (1993), 218–31; Paul Stephenson, "Images of the Bulgar-Slayer: Three Art Historical Notes," *BMGS*, 25 (2001), 44–66; and Titos Papamastorakis, "The Bamberg Hanging Reconsidered," *ΔΧΑΕ*, 24 (2003), 375–92. See also



Figure 2.9 Ivory Diptych (“Barberini ivory”), Louvre, Paris

the obelisk of Theodosius I erected and still standing in the Hippodrome (Figure 2.10).⁸⁵ Michael’s thirteenth-century sculptural group, by contrast,

Gudrun Bühl, *Constantinopolis und Roma: Stadtpersonifikationen der Spätantike* (Zurich, 1995). The traditional imagery of imperial victory is summarized succinctly by Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer* (Cambridge, 2003), 49–65; and see also Grabar, *L’empereur*, 45–54, for imperial rider imagery.

⁸⁵ According to later Russian descriptions, Justinian’s monument included “three pagan emperors . . . also bronze and on columns, kneeling before the emperor Justinian and offering



Figure 2.10 Base of the Obelisk of Theodosius I, west face, Hippodrome, Constantinople

shares little of this obvious victorious rhetoric. In the Palaiologan monument, the emperor, traditionally supplicated, is positioned in the role of suppliant. Like the early Byzantine images of tribute, gift-giving likewise motivates the thirteenth-century monument, but the dynamics of imperial prestation appear to be reversed: the emperor is represented offering his city as his gift. This configuration is virtually unprecedented.⁸⁶ Rather than a straightforward reversal of hierarchy, however, the imagery of Michael's monument, as we will see, articulates a more ambiguous dialogue between privilege and protection.

Michael's establishment of Palaiologan rule in Constantinople looked back to previous eras, and through this monument, he created a new imperial image by forging connections to previous great rulers and dynasties in the service of his present circumstances. The mode of colossal representation in and of itself and the medium of bronze recall the heroic mode of the

their cities into his hands." See Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 136. This has led Mango, "Columns of Justinian," 3, to propose a kind of "monumental tableau" of tribute bearing barbarians on separate columns before a higher column with Justinian's equestrian portrait.

⁸⁶ The mosaic in the southwest vestibule of Hagia Sophia represents an important exception and will be addressed below, 136, 139–40.

past. Alice-Mary Talbot points out that the use of bronze should be seen as a deliberate revival of late Roman monumental art, especially since this was the first monumental bronze sculptural group erected in the capital since the early seventh century.⁸⁷ As an exceptional commemorative monument, the sculpture signified hallowed greatness and ties to the past on a material level. Within the context of the later thirteenth century, it also proclaimed prosperity. In a city stripped of its riches during the crusader occupation, including countless bronze statues, the message of prosperity conveyed by large-scale bronze work was particularly poignant. These prosperous associations hold true regardless of whether the sculpture was created anew or from reused antique fragments. Justinian's bronze rider, after all, was constructed from an older sculpture of Theodosius in all likelihood, and according to some sources, Constantine's bronze effigy on his porphyry column was recycled as well.⁸⁸ Imperial images aside, the city of Constantine and his successors had been filled with marble and bronze antique sculpture until the Fourth Crusade, including the famous quadriga now at San Marco in Venice that once stood above the starting gate of the Hippodrome. Indeed, central to Constantine's establishment of New Rome was the acquisition and public display of antiques from all corners of his expansive empire.⁸⁹

The erection of Michael's colossal column followed in a long line of honorific imperial columns that anchored the city in his day, and these feature as prominent markers of the city on Buondelmonti's views of Constantinople. The Florentine, who was much more interested in civic structures and commemorative columns than churches, remarks that a number of columns

⁸⁷ Talbot, "Restoration," 259, drawing on Mango. According to Choniates, Andronikos I Komnenos intended to erect a bronze statue on a column, but was deposed before its completion. Choniates explicitly says that he planned to set up the monument as part of a larger agenda of what we might call imperial propaganda. See Harry Magoulias (trans.), *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984), 183. The Choniates passage is analyzed by Papamastorakis, "Tampering with History," 205. Choniates' text is a rich source for the imperial uses of public images. See Eastmond, "An Intentional Error?," who discusses the methodological ambiguities involved. Even if the late twelfth-century sculpture had been erected atop the *Anemodoulion* as was planned, it would have been the first such monument since the seventh century and thus would participate in an ideology of renewal – Komnenian *renovatio*.

⁸⁸ Thomov, "Last Column," 82, proposed that the figure of the archangel was a reused and reworked antique Nike sculpture. The impact of monumental bronze would not be diminished either even if artisans were imported from Italy for the commission, as noted by Talbot, "Restoration," 259–60: "the technology was available in Italy if the emperor was willing to pay." Picking up on this idea, Durand, "À propos du grand groupe en bronze," has argued that the monument was of western manufacture and has provided comparanda in support of this hypothesis.

⁸⁹ Bassett, *Urban Image*, is crucial in this regard.

in particular stood out as being particularly tall, over 60 cubits, including the columns of Constantine, Justinian, and the one erected in front of the Church of the Apostles.⁹⁰ Like monumental bronze sculpture, the construction of honorific columns seems to have come to an end in the early seventh century.⁹¹ Through the revival of the older mode, medium, and technique, Michael's monument, in an immediately recognizable manner, conveyed prosperity and even triumph.

Imperial prestation and *proskynesis*

Despite the triumphant connotations of the colossal bronze and columnar format, the overall tone of Michael's monument remains decidedly more somber. Rather than receiving tribute from vanquished hands of barbarians or holding enemies at bay with a raised arm, Michael is described at the archangel's feet commending the city to the protection of the *archi-strategos*. Ultimately, the scene itself, triumphant in its monumental format and medium, is one of offering and protection. It thus presents a dialectic between two traditionally distinct pictorial modes: the older bronze heroic mode, where the monumental scale marks the terrain and is visible from a great distance, paired with a more intimate scene of gift-giving at its summit that would be difficult to see clearly because of its great height. In other words, it employs an older, more hallowed format for a new – and, I will argue, distinctly Palaiologan – iconography. This iconography, to which we now turn, reconceptualizes earlier Byzantine conventions for imperial portraiture in order to display to the restored Byzantine capital city a distinctive Palaiologan image of imperial thanksgiving.

Sources agree about the two basic components of Michael's lost monument: the posture and the action are undoubtedly kneeling and giving. The emperor appeared at the feet of the archangel to whom he entrusted the city held in his hands. Keeping in mind that Constantinople itself was conceptualized as a gift returned to Byzantine rule by the benevolence of God, we should read Michael's monument as a commemorative image of

⁹⁰ Mango, "Columns of Justinian," 10. Manuel Chrysoloras's *Comparison of Old and New Rome* speaks of extraordinary columns supporting commemorative statues throughout the city. He even mentions the Church of the Holy Apostles specifically. See Christine Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Eloquence, 1400–1470* (Oxford, 1992), 210–11.

⁹¹ Talbot, "Restoration," 259; Mango, "The Columns of Justinian"; and Grabar, *L'empereur*, 100–1.

thanks for that divinely granted gift. Even with only the briefest of textual descriptions, it is evident that Michael's lost bronze monument engaged in dialogue with imperial images in the city's venerable sacro-imperial center, Hagia Sophia, not only with the imperial bronze equestrian sculpture in the Augustaion, as I have already discussed, but also with the building's inner fabric of mosaics, to which we will turn shortly, mosaics that evoke imperial intercession, transgression, humility, *taxis*, and authority. Even without full knowledge of its iconographic details, it is clear that Michael's monument recalls the past through its triumphant medium and format – as, again, a larger-than-life bronze sculpture crowning a monumental honorific column – and it also proclaimed a genealogy of imperial donation and protection through specific visual citations of the Great Church's mosaics installed in zones associated with judgment, penitence, and the negotiation of patriarchal and imperial authority.

The monument's singular vision of Palaiologan imperium reconfigures well-established visual conventions. Generally in Byzantine art, gift-giving is conveyed through a symbolic scene of a donor offering a mimetic emblem of his or her gift to Christ or the Virgin. Illuminated manuscripts often emphasize their patronage by inserting the donors literally into a sacred visual program of intercession offering their gifts, as in the thirteenth-century Gospel Book on Mount Athos, Iveron 5, introduced in Chapter 1, where the earthly contemporary donor figure holds his commission – his book, his gift – in his hand as he is led by the Virgin towards Christ and his holy namesake John Chrysostom (Figure 1.17a–b).⁹² In monumental programs, too, such a self-referential logic is apparent, as at Mileševa, also introduced in Chapter 1, where Prince Vladislav is pictured led by the Virgin to Christ while holding a micro-architectural model of the Church of the Ascension (Figure 1.16). In both, the *ktetors* hold the very book or edifice that bears the representation on its pages and walls. Such *mise-en-abyme* imagery, characterized by embedded self-reflexivity, is common

⁹² The Leo Bible best exemplifies this transactional logic of donation in its combination of a visualization of pious intercession and donation with textual gloss. On the left of the opening the book's donor Leo, accompanied by an inscription detailing the precise titles of his office, is depicted on knee before the Theotokos presenting to her his offering, the very book bearing the representation. The standing Theotokos gestures toward the jewel-encrusted book with one hand and with the other directs attention to the upper-right corner, where Christ offers his blessing. Framing this visualization of pious donation and intercession, a versified epigram expands upon the scene. The combination of the ritual gesture of abasement, visualization of intercession, textual indication of court station as well as poetic epigram together convey the full force of the stakes of the book's commission and donation. See Evans and Wixom (eds.), *Glory of Byzantium*, 88–9 (cat. no. 42).



Figure 2.11 Apse mosaic, Church of San Vitale, Ravenna

in medieval donation scenes where it serves to heighten the force of gift-giving by reduplicating the gift in mimetic miniature. This *topos* has a long and venerable history going back to the early Byzantine period, where, for example, the sixth-century apse mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna and the Eufrasiana in Poreč feature their bishop-saints Ecclesius and Eufrasius bearing church models in their hands (Figures 2.11 and 2.12). In each case, the micro-architectural models convey a general sense of mimetic fidelity. While not exact replicas of the actual structure within which the mosaic images are installed, the correspondence is strong: Ecclesius's mosaic church model is centrally planned like San Vitale, and Eufrasius's church in both reality and representation is basilical.⁹³

⁹³ See J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge, 1995); and Ann Terry and Henry Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč* (University Park, 2007). See also Jäggi, "Donator oder Fundator?," 27–45; Ann Marie Yasin, "Making Use of Paradise: Church Benefactors, Heavenly Visions, and the Late Antique Commemorative Imagination" in Colum Hourihane (ed.), *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History* (Princeton, 2010), 39–57; and Maria Cristina Carile, "Memories of Buildings? Messages in Late Antique Architectural Representations" in Angeliki Lymberopoulou (ed.), *Images of the Byzantine World: Visions, Messages and Meanings, Studies Presented to Leslie Brubaker* (Aldershot, 2011), 15–33. Grabar, *L'empereur*, 109, points out that despite the limited number of extant instances of this, its popularity is testified by its imitation from the twelfth century onwards in Slavic lands, Sicily, the Caucasus and later Romania. This



Figure 2.12 Apse mosaic, Basilica Eufrasiana, Poreč

This literal representation of gift-giving – where the identity of the donor is explicitly linked to the micro-architectural model of the gift – conveys the privilege of patronage in an immediately recognizable way. The act of offering establishes a dialogue between earthly patrons and holy figures: the giving of the model of the sacred edifice to the sacred entity implies entrusting it to their protection, as Pachymeres’s text explicitly states with regard to Michael’s bronze monument. Michael’s sculpture follows this configuration, but rather than a single architectural building, he offers and entrusts a model of the whole city to the archangel. By holding the city in his hands, even as he offers it to his sacred namesake, he adopts the role of the donor – and hence founder – of the entire city in an explicit visual evocation of the Palaiologan New Constantine, an evocation made more explicit by its location on a tall column in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles, the imperial mausoleum of Constantine the Great and the subsequent Byzantine rulers of New Rome.

mimetic fidelity is only on the most general level. The micro-architectural models do not faithfully replicate architectural details of the architectural structures, but still convey a recognizable sense of the buildings. Architectural representation is the subject of a historiography too vast to fully engage here.

The visual language of gift-giving enables Michael to proclaim his centrality to the imperial city in terms of humility, and this is key in light of his fraught rule. Constantinople is literally represented in Michael's hands, but by offering it to the archangel as a gift, the emperor is shown as the terrestrial participant of a sacred transaction of indebtedness, akin to the logic expressed in *typika* of the period. A shifting sense of hierarchy is implicit in most gift exchanges, as anthropologists have long acknowledged. In this instance, the representation of giving implies that the city is his to give, even if divinely granted to his possession. And at the same time, the bronze casts Michael as a supplicant offering his city, in turn, to the sacred authority.

This dialogue between authority and humility is generated not only by the visual language of gift-giving but also by the posture of the emperor. Pachymeres describes Michael at the feet of the archangel (ἐς πόδας δ' ἔχων), and in the Buondelmonti manuscript he is described as kneeling (*genuflexus*). This posture is best characterized as *proskynesis*, the ritual gesture of supplication or reverence that ranged in physical terms from a mere nod or bow to genuflection and to full prostration.⁹⁴ Michael's *adventus* in 1261 fully mobilized this gesture as a sign of deference and respect to the Virgin in order to recalibrate the ceremonial tone from triumph to thanksgiving, as noted in the introduction to Part I. Again, Akropolites describes how the emperor, after removing his headgear, led those assembled at the ceremonial entrance to the city in a ritual cycle of prostration by falling to the ground with bent knee for each of the 100 prayers before processing through the Golden Gate with the icon of the Virgin.⁹⁵ This spectacular performance

⁹⁴ Cutler acknowledges the wide semantic range of possible poses used by Byzantine artists to convey the concept of *proskynesis*. Cutler's *Transfigurations*, 53–110, remains the most exhaustive treatment of the visual dimensions of *proskynesis*; it surveys the different facets, including defeat and submission (65–7), salutation and veneration (67–75), oblation and dedication (75–80), and entreaty, penitence, and prayer (80–91). See also I. Spatharakis, "The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art: A Study in Connection with a Nomisma of Andronicus II Palaeologue," *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving*, 49 (1974), 190–205 [repr. *Studies in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination and Iconography* (London, 1996) XIV]; McCormick, "Proskynesis"; Rodolphe Guiland, "Autour du Livre des Cérémonies de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète. La cérémonie de la προσκύνησις," *REG* (1946–7), 251–9; O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser*, 84–94; Grabar, *L'empereur*, 98–106; and most recently Leslie Brubaker, "Gesture in Byzantium," *Past and Present*, 4 (2009), 36–56, who compares a series of descriptions of *proskynesis* with the conclusion that "In Byzantium, the language of gesture cannot be translated literally: when the social arena shifts, so may the nuance attached to the same word." To be clear, neither Pachymeres nor Gregoras use the word *proskynesis* explicitly in their brief references to Michael's bronze monument, and yet positioning the emperor at the feet of the archangel suggests some form of *proskynesis*.

⁹⁵ Again, see above, 27–28. Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 383–4.

of *proskynesis* emphasized humility rather than triumph and was entirely in keeping with the rhetoric surrounding the Byzantine restoration of the imperial city. Again, the prologues of the *typika* discussed above stress that the restoration was not attributed to Michael's military strength or his diplomatic acumen, but rather to divine benevolence. Just as the ritual cycle of *proskynesis* at the ceremonial entrance of the city expresses gratitude and reverence in gestural terms, so too does Michael's bronze monument adopt this pose for a similar message.

Two passages describing *proskynesis* involving diplomatic engagement with Italian maritime communities encapsulate the two main significations of this ritual gesture: subservience and honor or privilege. Pachymeres relates an episode involving the punishment of Genoese merchants for their insolence. Following an attenuated battle resulting from the abuse of export regulations on alum dyes, a Greek sailor was taunted by a Genoese, who exclaimed "We will soon become masters of Constantinople."⁹⁶ The Greek immediately killed him, and then, in turn, was killed. When news of these events reached the emperor, retribution was demanded. As imperial troops surrounded the Genoese and "awaited the orders to put them to death," the following ritual display of entreaty ensued:

the Genoese, terrified by so formidable a spectacle, lost much of their arrogance and, prostrating themselves on the ground as if with a cord around their necks, asked for clemency from the emperor. Thus they appeased his anger by their submission and purchased their lives with gold.

This passage vividly conveys the submissiveness of prostration as a necessary component of entreaty. Triggering associations of complete submission, the gesture itself conjures enslavement ("as if with a cord around their necks") in order to appease. The spectacle of abasement evokes images of vanquished barbarians paying obeisance to the victorious ruler, as in the frontispiece to the Psalter of Basil II, where the emperor's investiture is surrounded by fully prostrate figures with palms to the ground in manifestation of their

⁹⁶ Pachymeres, *De Michael et Andronico*, I.421–25, trans. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, 201–92. The source of the punishment was an abuse of the imperial regulation of alum export. At the request of a member of the Genoese Zaccaria family, who had been granted control of an area rich with alum mines, the emperor forbade the Genoese from exporting alum directly (hence restricting the circulation through Constantinople and the Genoese community in Pera). In defiance, however, Genoese pirates continued to pillage and transport alum and other merchandise, even after their compatriots in Pera urged restraint. The Byzantine imperial fleet thus attacked the Genoese vessel and subdued it after a protracted battle and with the assistance of a vessel from the Catalan company.



Figure 2.13 Psalter of Basil II, Venice, Marciana Library, Venice, Gr.17.fol.3

total and complete submission (Figure 2.13).⁹⁷ This episode as narrated by Pachymeres suggests that in a case of extreme urgency, the defeated take recourse to *proskynesis* in order to plead clemency.

Pseudo-Kodinos emphasizes a related facet of this ritualized gesture as a privilege granted as a sign of esteem. In contrasting Michael's reception

⁹⁷ Venice Marc.Gr.17, fol. 3. See Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*, 51–62.

of Venetian and Genoese envoys, the two Italian maritime powers are distinguished from each other by their participation, or lack thereof, in the ceremonial performance of *proskynesis*. The emperor and the Genoese were at this time united in a perpetual peace, which entailed gestural honors to be rendered to the emperor:

When the *podestà* arrived from Genoa, for the first and only time, upon entering for the prostration (*proskynesis*) he flexed his knee twice, after which he entered the door of the triklinium and stood in the middle. Then he advanced and kissed the foot and hand of the emperor, who was seated on the throne. At the same time, other Genoese nobles, coming from other places, prostrated themselves and kissed the foot and hand of the emperor. Each day when they came for the prostration, they removed their hats and bent their knees twice.⁹⁸

According to this protocol, peace included *proskynesis*. The Genoese, when in perpetual peace, were given the privilege of performing *proskynesis* to the emperor. This was not the case with the Venetians, however, with whom the emperor had only concluded a temporary truce.⁹⁹ Pseudo-Kodinos tells us that the precise ceremonies had not been established for the Venetians as they had been for the Genoese. The arrival of their leader is described as follows: “the first day, when he was supposed to prostrate himself, he and the men of his suite only bent the knee; they did not kiss the foot of the emperor . . . and in the future they only removed their hats and did not bend the knee.” Unlike the Genoese, whose state of perpetual peace was given concrete ceremonial expression in the protocol for prostration, the Venetians’ temporary peace was not formalized or prescribed, and accordingly they did not honor the emperor with *proskynesis*. This comparison suggests, as other scholars have observed, that the Byzantines considered it a privilege for guests to be allowed to pay respect to the emperor in this way.¹⁰⁰

The ritualized gesture of abasement could be employed as a form of entreaty for the defeated, as in Pachymeres’s narrative, and for Pseudo-Kodinos it could also manifest the finely tuned degrees of status for foreign envoys in a hierarchical court system. As a key component of Byzantine ceremonial, *proskynesis* was a prescriptive element for imperial audiences

⁹⁸ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 235–6; Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, 23–4, whose translation is followed here; Macrides is preparing a new edition and commentary of Pseudo-Kodinos, portions of which appear in Brubaker, “Gesture in Byzantium,” 49.

⁹⁹ Michael “wanted to make war with them after a short time, for this reason he did not make a lasting peace but concluded a truce for a certain short period of time.” Brubaker, “Gesture in Byzantium,” 49.

¹⁰⁰ Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 70; Spatharakis, “Proskynesis”; and Brubaker, “Gesture in Byzantium.”

and processions, and was essential in visualizing ceremonial *taxis*.¹⁰¹ In either case, it was a position of supplication underscoring the power and potential magnanimity of the supplicated emperor. While foreign dignitaries paid their respect to the emperor through the ritual act of *proskynesis*, the emperor himself performed *proskynesis* as a visible sign of his piety. When Michael staged his elaborate entrance to Constantinople in 1261, he adopted this gesture, likening himself to a supplicant as an act of spectacular humility at the perimeter of the city. His *proskynesis* was directed toward the divine, the icon of the Virgin. No ritual gesture could better express the reverential mood of the event.

Often in Byzantine art, *proskynesis* constitutes a ritualized form of debase-ment reserved for encounters between donors and holy figures as a votive visual strategy.¹⁰² Donors who adopt this pose liken themselves visually to the debased in order to heighten the worthiness of the one being supplicated. It is from this lowered position that their prayers might most effectively be heard and heeded. In a scene of supplication embroidered on a textile in the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino dating to the beginning of the fifteenth century, a contemporary male figure crouches at the feet of the Archangel Michael, looking up beseechingly, hands outstretched in a gesture of prayer (Figure 2.14),¹⁰³ echoing the lost bronze monument of Michael Palaiologos (despite the fact that the supplicant does not offer a gift). The contemporary figure's position at the feet of the archangel, who stands with sword drawn, evokes a particular reference: the Old Testament hero Joshua at the feet of the angel of the Lord as described in Joshua

¹⁰¹ Brubaker, "Gesture in Byzantium," 46, has most recently reconsidered the ritual gesture of *proskynesis* by comparing its articulation in three distinct contexts to emphasize that "the diplomatics of gesture were finely tuned to gradations of status." This is one of the episodes that are also discussed by Brubaker – the other two are the receptions of Liudprand of Cremona and Olga of Kiev.

¹⁰² The scholarship on votive strategies and donor imagery is vast. Some of the relevant literature is listed in note 43 of the Introduction as well as note 100 of Chapter 1.

¹⁰³ D. Giuseppe Cozza-Luzi, "Di un antico Vessillo Navale" in *Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* (Rome, 1890), ser. II, vol. III, 1–85; Alberto Gibelli, *Monographia dell'antico monastero di S Croce Avellana* (Faenza, 1895), 41; Luigi Serra, "A Byzantine Naval Standard (circa 1411)," *Burlington Magazine*, 34 (1919), 152–7; Luigi Serra, *L'Arte nelle Marche, Vol. I: Dalle Origini Cristiane alla Fine del Gotico* (Pesaro, 1929), 324–6; Luigi Serra, *Il Palazzo Ducale e la galleria nazionale di Urbino* (Rome, 1930), 40–5; Silvio Giuseppe Mercati, "Sull'iscrizione del così detto 'vesillo navale' di Manuele Paleologo conservato nella Galleria Nazionale delle Marche in Urbino" in *Collectanea Byzantina* II (Bari, 1970), 242–8; Sergio Bettini and Furlan Italo, *Venezia e Bisanzio* (Venice, 1974), no. 119; Antonio Carile, "Manuele Nothos Paleologo. Nota Prosopografica," *Thesaurismata*, 12 (1975), 137–47; and André Guillou, "Inscriptions byzantines d'Italie sur tissu" in Ihor Ševčenko and Irmgard Hutter (eds.), *ΑΕΤΟΣ, Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango* (Stuttgart, 1998), 174–6.



Figure 2.14 Embroidery of Manuel and the Archangel, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino

5:13–15. At the walls of Jericho, Joshua encountered a man with his sword drawn who revealed himself to be the commander of the army of the Lord, at which point the leader of the Israelite army fell to the ground before him. This scene features frequently in illustrated Octateuchs, as in the thirteenth-century Vatopedi codex 602 (fol. 350v), where the archangel's frontal pose directly engages the viewer as a figure worthy of veneration, with Joshua in full *proskynesis* before him reaching in supplication (Figure 2.15).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Two distinct temporal moments of the narrative are conveyed through continuous narration on this page: on the left, Joshua is shown with sword drawn and then, having realized the true identity of the archangel, he appears crouching before the archangel with arms outstretched as suppliant, as the text relates. On the Vatopedi manuscript (Athos, Vatopedi Monastery, Cod. 602), see John Lowden, "The Production of the Vatopedi Octateuch," *DOP*, 36 (1982), 115–126; John Lowden, *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination* (University Park, 1992), 29–33; Kurt Weitzmann and Massimo Bernabò, *The Byzantine Octateuchs* (Princeton, 1999); and most recently, John Lowden, "Illustrated Octateuch Manuscripts: A Byzantine Phenomenon" in Magdalino and Nelson (eds.), *Old Testament in Byzantium*, 107–52, with specific discussion on the relationship between Vatopedi 602 and its model Vat.Gr.746 at 115–18. See also Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 65–67 and 59–61, for *proskynesis* in biblical iconography.



Figure 2.15 Joshua and the Archangel, Vatopedi Octateuch, Ms. 602 fol. 350v, Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos

The embroidered contemporary scene of supplication in Urbino is structured by this biblical context not only through gestures but also by the verbal petition that frames the piece. In this first-person petition the supplicant compares himself explicitly to Joshua:

As once Joshua, son of Navi, having bent knee threw himself at your feet asking for strength to defeat hordes of enemies, so now I, your servant Manuel, son of Eudocia, glorious and thrice-blessed who had for father an emperor and mother of the purple branch, now I throw myself at your feet as a suppliant and pray that you shelter me with your golden wings, and, going before, save me from all danger, [I pray that] I may have you as protector and guardian of my soul and body throughout my life, and that at the last and terrible judgment I find, thanks to you, a favorable Lord; from my mother's womb, I was entrusted to you, O Commander of the Angels.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Carile, "Manuele Nothos," 143–4; and Guillou, "Inscriptions byzantines," 175. For comparative epigrams, see the appendix of Valerie Nunn, "The Encheiron as Adjunct to the Icon in the Middle Byzantine Period," *BMGS*, 10 (1986), 91–102.

The supplicant opens his appeal by invoking the Old Testament hero, thus establishing an analogy between himself, Manuel of Byzantine imperial lineage,¹⁰⁶ and Joshua, son of Navi. In the Urbino silk, the contemporary Byzantine patron appears in the guise of Joshua, intertwining his own petition with the Old Testament narrative – according to the inscription, Manuel beseeches Michael “just as” (ὡς πρὶν) Joshua once did. The two are linked both through linguistic comparison and also visually by the same posture of deep *proskynesis*.¹⁰⁷ In this instance, the donor’s prayer is answered as the archangel assents to his wishes by inscription at the center of the silk.¹⁰⁸

Even though Michael’s bronze monument lacks the textual context to render such a comparison explicit, the emperor’s position at the feet of the archangel echoes the iconography of the leader of the Israelite army kneeling in supplication before the angel of the Lord. Joshua was an exemplum of military might and his humility before the angel at the walls of Jericho provided a concrete exemplum for Michael, who processed through the walls of Constantinople in repeated *proskynesis* and prayer. For a monumental public commemoration of the empire’s restoration, the delicate balance of triumph and humility so marked out in texts of the period could be best conveyed by visual reference to Joshua at the feet of the archangel. Joshua is invoked explicitly in Michael’s panegyric by both Manuel Holobolos and Gregory of Cyprus.¹⁰⁹ Both of these orators also compare the emperor to the

¹⁰⁶ The figure in question is generally taken to be Manuel, illegitimate son of Byzantine Emperor John V Palaiologos (1373–91), distinguished from his brother and future Emperor Manuel II (1391–1425) by the epithet *nothos* (illegitimate). Little is known about Manuel *nothos*, although sources agree that he was appointed commander of the Byzantine fleet that defended the empire from an Ottoman naval attack in the early 1400s. See Carile, “Manuele Nothos,” 145–6; John Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus, 1391–1425: A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, 1969), 285n 153. See the *ODB*’s genealogical table of the Palaiologan family, 1558–9; Averkiou Papadopoulos, *Versuch einer Genealogie der Palaiologen, 1259–1453* (Speyer, 1938), 58; and *PLP*, nos 91885 and 92618. Ivan Drpić’s forthcoming study, “The Patron’s ‘I’: Art, Selfhood, and the Later Byzantine Dedicatory Epigram,” introduces further literature and points out that the identification of the donor is not based on direct evidence.

¹⁰⁷ Recall also the early thirteenth-century *peplos* in Venice, introduced in the previous chapter, where the disembodied donor appears at the feet of the archangels – the inscription not only identifies the donor but it also explicitly says that he commissioned the textile with his own image at their feet so as to gain the support of the heavenly allies.

¹⁰⁸ In response to the metric words inscribed in gold along the periphery of the piece, the first-person petition or prayer, an affirmative reply is embroidered beneath the archangel’s wing: “My ear is attentive to your necessity and I protect you with my wings as my servant, and with my sword I will put your enemies to flight.” Again, see Carile, “Manuel Nothos Paleologo,” 143–4; and Guillou, “Inscriptions byzantines,” 175.

¹⁰⁹ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 87–8.

Old Testament figure of Zorobabel, more specifically to celebrate Michael as liberator of the city, much in keeping with the rhetorical tradition of Constantinople as the New Zion discussed above.¹¹⁰ They also compare the emperor to David, the favorite biblical antetype or “model” for usurpers who had sinned, repented, and received mercy.¹¹¹ Byzantine emperors had often been compared to David; Komnenian emperors in particular employed this comparison frequently, and David would continue to serve as a rhetorical model in encomia for the early Palaiologoi, particularly for Michael.¹¹² Significantly, Byzantine images of David included an established iconographic program of *proskynesis* to signify intense prayer or penance (*metanoia*).¹¹³

One of Holobolos’s orations that draws extensively on analogy with the biblical King David also addresses Michael as a New Constantine in its title.¹¹⁴ This combination of key models of foundation and repentance, themes that are evoked in the bronze monument, calls to mind the particularly fraught context of the emperor’s consolidation of imperial power. By breaking the oaths of allegiance sworn to John IV Laskaris in Nicaea, Michael secured the imperial throne for his own line, but also incited the rage of Patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos, who had drafted and administered the oath in 1259. After dethroning, blinding, and expelling the legitimate heir to the Laskarid throne, Michael was excommunicated by the

¹¹⁰ Michael was celebrated as a “New Zorobabel” for liberating Constantinople. His successor, Andronikos II, was also compared to Zorobabel but for liberating the Church (heavenly Jerusalem), as discussed further in the conclusion to Chapter 2. See Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 99–100, 87 and table 2.

¹¹¹ In terms of biblical comparisons for Michael VIII, Holobolos cites David most, five times in fact, followed by Moses, Solomon and Zorobabel. See Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 87 and table 2. Gregory of Cyprus also compares Michael to David most. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 50, writes of Old Testament antetypes: “No new event was wholly true nor any new emperor wholly authentic until they had been recognized and labeled by reference to an Old Testament model.” See the introduction and various essays in Nelson and Magdalino (eds.), *Old Testament in Byzantium*, especially Claudia Rapp, “Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium,” 175–97.

¹¹² See Magdalino and Nelson (eds.), *Old Testament in Byzantium*, 24ff.; Ioli Kalavrezou, Nicolette Trahoulia, and Shalom Sabar, “Critique of the Emperor in the Vatican Psalter gr. 752,” *DOP*, 47 (1993), 195–219; Robert Deshman, “The Exalted Servant: The Ruler Theology of the Prayerbook of Charles the Bald,” *Viator*, 11 (1980), 394–417; Macrides, “From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi,” 279; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 128–30; and Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 114–24. David is invoked for Andronikos II as well, although with significantly less frequency than his father, despite the fact that Andronikos was the most lauded Palaiologan emperor according to Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 130.

¹¹³ The pictorial cycle of Vatican Psalter 752 fully exploits this gesture of *proskynesis* in the service of imperial critique. See Kalavrezou, Trahoulia, and Sabar, “Critique of the Emperor.”

¹¹⁴ See Angelov, “The Confession.”

patriarch early in 1262, a sanction that remained in effect for the next five years. As a special concession, the emperor's name continued to be liturgically commemorated, but his access to the Great Church was curtailed – he could venerate the icons before the commencement of the liturgy and he could stand behind the ambo during the liturgy only until the catechumens left the church.¹¹⁵ During the period of his excommunication (1262–7), Michael pleaded with the patriarch to assign penance. But even after removing his crown and performing *proskynesis* before the patriarch, Arsenios would neither lift the anathema nor prescribe a specific ecclesiastical penance, and eventually he banned the emperor from entering the Great Church altogether.¹¹⁶ The deepening animosity between emperor and patriarch having escalated to this point, Michael had Patriarch Arsenios deposed, banished, and excommunicated in 1265.¹¹⁷ Arsenios was initially succeeded by Germanos III (1265–6)¹¹⁸ and then Joseph I (1266–9), the emperor's own spiritual confessor, under whom Michael was pardoned at last. In an elaborate performance of penance in Hagia Sophia on the feast day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin on February 2, 1267, the emperor performed *proskynesis* before the new patriarch and each bishop, who all in turn granted him forgiveness. This event came to take on special veneration for the duration of Michael's reign: according to Pachymeres, the feast of the Purification, and hence his own pardon, was specially celebrated.¹¹⁹

These circumstances provide a more specific lens through which to view Michael's commemorative bronze monument and the wholly original imperial image it displayed to the city. While the monument should be read as a pictorial evocation of the emperor's New Constantine epithet – its location

¹¹⁵ On this "third degree of excommunication," see *ibid.*, 195 n. 8; and Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), III. 14. Arsenios had been originally appointed patriarch in 1254 under John IV's father, Theodore II Laskaris, and thus Macrides, "The New Constantine," 19–20, points out that Michael essentially inherited him as patriarch and had to endure Arsenios's loyalty to the Laskarid cause.

¹¹⁶ Macrides, "The New Constantine," 20. However, he did not allow his sword to be removed. See Angelov, "The Confession," 195; and Marie Theres Fögen, "Kaiser unter Kirchenbann im östlichen und westlichen Mittelalter," *Rechtshistorisches Journal*, 16 (1997), 527–49, who emphasizes that unlike western examples of royal excommunication, Michael VIII relied on the theocratic image of New David in need of patriarchal blessing to rule.

¹¹⁷ Angelov, "Confession," 197. These events gave rise to the Arsenite schism, which will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

¹¹⁸ On Germanos, see Macrides, "The New Constantine," 21–2 with bibliography, especially n. 50 on the pre-existing relationship between Michael and Germanos.

¹¹⁹ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 45, and "Confession," 197; Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), II, 397–99, and II, 573; and Vitalien Laurent, *Les registres des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1, fasc. 4: *Les registres de 1208 à 1309* (Paris, 1971), no. 1386.



Figure 2.16 Constantine and Justinian with the Virgin and Child, southwest vestibule mosaic, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople

in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles underscores this point, as does the positioning of the city as his gift in his hands – it also directly addresses the Great Church and in so doing it raises key questions of authority and legitimacy. Thus far, *proskynesis* and prestation have been presented as general components in the repertoire of imperial ceremonial gestures that each engage in a dialogue of hierarchy, a dialogue of receiving and offering gifts, tribute, gestures of abasement and submission. In what follows, I trace the more specific references of these gestures as they relate to the particular context of early Palaiologan rule.

Although the overall composition of a kneeling emperor donating the city model is unprecedented in Byzantine art, its constitutive features are all found in the imperial mosaics in the narthex and vestibule of Hagia Sophia. In fact, the only extant representation of an emperor holding a model of the city is in the tenth-century mosaic in the southwest vestibule over the “Beautiful Doors,” under which the emperor would pass as he entered the Great Church on major feast days (Figure 2.16). Beyond this threshold, in the lunette over the “Imperial Doors,” the central entrance that leads from the narthex to the naos, a second lunette mosaic depicts an emperor kneeling in *proskynesis* before Christ, his arms outstretched as he looks up

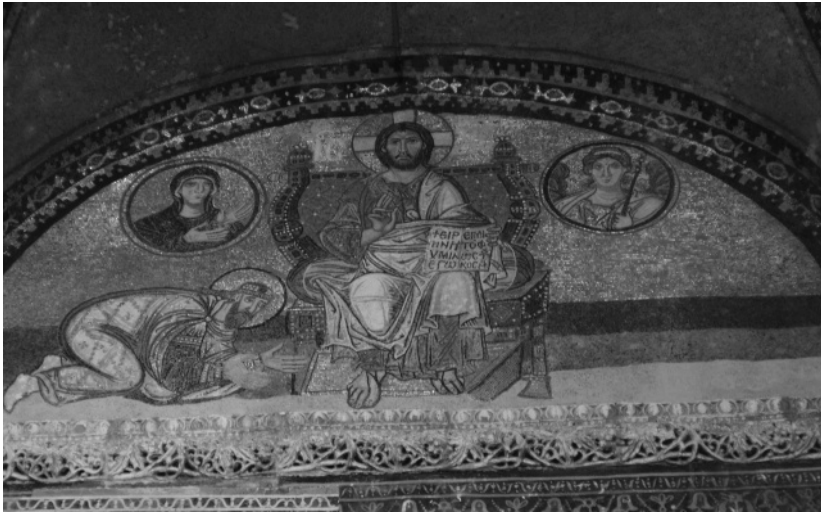


Figure 2.17 Byzantine Emperor in *Proskynesis*, inner narthex mosaic, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople

beseekingly (Figure 2.17). This is a virtually singular monumental image of a Byzantine emperor in *proskynesis*.¹²⁰ Direct reference to these exceptional mosaics, I propose, is not accidental. Rather, Michael's bronze monument deliberately adopts and reconfigures the Great Church's particular visual models of imperium to create a charged message of Palaiologan sovereignty within the fraught context of contested imperial and patriarchal authority.

The only other extant monument to combine such explicit visual allusions to the two imperial threshold mosaics of Hagia Sophia is the depiction of Theodore Metochites in the inner narthex of the Church of the Chora where the *grand logothete* of Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, Michael's

¹²⁰ While numerous images of *proskynesis* are attested from across the empire and also emulated beyond the ever-shifting imperial boundaries, such as at the Norman court of Palermo, where Admiral George lies prostrate at the Virgin's feet in the mosaic in the Martorana, very few representations of *proskynesis* involving the emperor survive, and those that do generally depict him receiving tribute from the vanquished usually prostrate as discussed above. But the imagery of imperial *proskynesis* becomes more common in the Palaiologan period – in fact, the kneeling emperor constitutes the defining feature of the gold coinage of Michael VIII and his successors, as we will see in the next chapter. The exceptional status of this image of the prone emperor in the narthex of Hagia Sophia has led Nicolas Oikonomides, "Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic of Saint Sophia," *DOP*, 30 (1976), 153, to describe it as "a *hapax* in Byzantine art." By contrast, in "Exalted Servant," Robert Deshman describes a firmly established tradition in Byzantine art. The truth lies somewhere between these two positions, but in any case it is certainly extremely rare before the later Byzantine period. See André Grabar, *L'Iconoclisme byzantin* (Paris, 1957), 239–41; Grabar, *L'empereur*, 98–102; Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 63–4; and Spatharakis, "Proskynesis," 194.

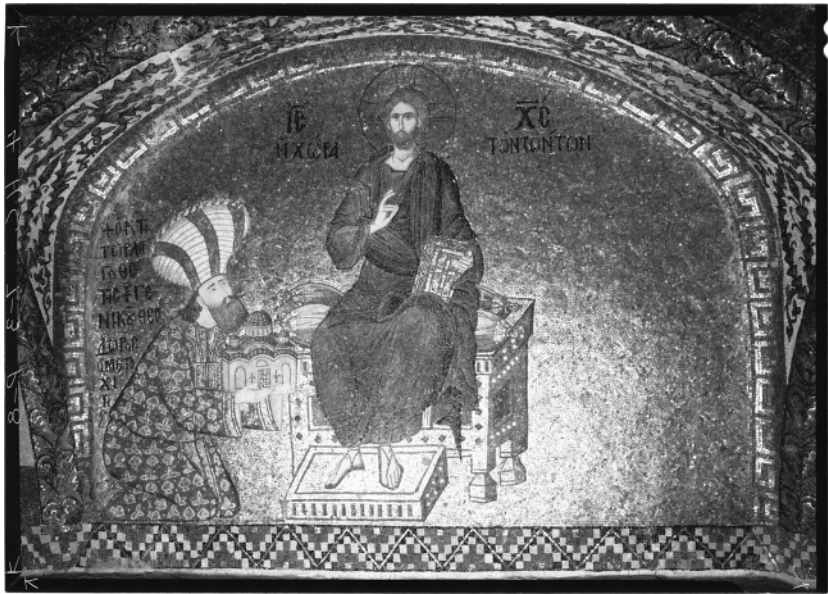


Figure 2.18 Theodore Metochites, Church of the Chora/Kariye Camii, Constantinople

son and successor, is portrayed kneeling and offering to an enthroned Christ a model of the monastic church he renovated and lavishly adorned from 1316 to 1321 (Figure 2.18). The Chora and Great Church mosaics are engaged in a dialogue that Robert Nelson has characterized as an instance of “intervisuality,” drawing on the literary concept of “intertextuality.”¹²¹ In engaging in this visual dialogue, Metochites, whose wealth was second only to the emperor and imperial family,¹²² inscribes himself into the center of “contemporary imperial/religious symbolism” in an act of imperial pretension.¹²³

Michael’s bronze monument, which should be considered an intermediary in this “intervisual” conversation as it was still standing at the time of Metochites’s commission,¹²⁴ forges visual associations with the Great

¹²¹ Robert S. Nelson, “The Chora and the Great Church: Intervisuality in Fourteenth-Century Constantinople,” *BMGS*, 23 (1999), 67–101 [repr. *Later Byzantine Painting: Art, Agency, and Appreciation* (Aldershot, 2007)], draws on the concept of intertextuality elaborated by literary theorists Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva.

¹²² Nelson, “Taxation with Representation,” 55, characterizes him as “prime minister of the Byzantine Empire, its richest citizen after the emperor and his family, [and] a major intellect.”

¹²³ Nelson, “Chora and the Great Church,” 80 and 86.

¹²⁴ Nelson (*ibid.*, 69) does mention Michael’s lost bronze monument. Early Palaiologan coinage, which will be discussed in the next chapter, constitutes another key to the circulation of the new imperial imagery.

Church in the service of a very different aim: to underscore the continuity of the imperial office in general and his legitimacy in particular, an issue of central import for the usurper who founded the longest imperial line of Byzantium. More specifically, its “intervisual” dialogue with the Great Church involves the realm of ritual as much as the art historical: through its citations of the vestibule and narthex images of Hagia Sophia, the bronze monument evokes ceremonial enactments of authority and legitimacy that were especially problematic for Michael. Gilbert Dagron, who has elaborated the ideological stakes of Byzantine imperial ceremonial most cogently, suggests that “beneath the peaceful and rather static surface of the ceremonial, lies a more dramatic ritual which was designed not only to glorify the person of the sovereign but to test the nature, limits and contradictions of his power, and to confirm his suitability to receive or preserve it.”¹²⁵ Precisely such an understanding of the dual revelatory nature of ritual – to both reveal and conceal fractures in authority – informs this reading of Michael’s intervisual bronze monument.

In its combination of imperial *proskynesis* and prestation, Michael’s bronze monument conveys the Palaiologan imperial ideal as deeply embedded in previous, and very particular, visual models of sovereignty: those displayed in the pendant imperial mosaics over the two main ceremonial entrances punctuating the processional route from the palace to the Great Church. According to the middle Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies*, the emperor would pass through these doors when he participated in the liturgy of Hagia Sophia on major feast days.¹²⁶ To the sound of acclamations, the emperor and his entourage would process from the Chalke across the Augustaion, past the monumental equestrian bronze statue of Justinian to the church’s southwest entrance. Here in the southwest vestibule above the “Beautiful Doors” is the mosaic of the great founders of the church and the city presenting their gifts to the Virgin and Child: on the left, Justinian offers a model of the Great Church he rebuilt in the sixth century, and on the right, Constantine the Great presents a model of the imperial city that he founded in the fourth century (Figure 2.16).¹²⁷ The mosaic promotes the Virgin’s

¹²⁵ Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 103.

¹²⁶ This procession is treated in considerable depth recently by Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 106–18; and George Majeska, “The Emperor in His Church: Imperial Ritual in the Church of St. Sophia” in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture*, 1–11; and Robert S. Nelson, *Hagia Sophia, 1850–1950: Holy Wisdom Modern Monument* (Chicago, 2004), 6–9, on the representational strategies at play in this image as they relate to imperial processions.

¹²⁷ The southwest vestibule mosaic provides the closest parallel for Michael’s lost monument, at least for the appearance of the city in the emperor’s hands, and hence it is consistently invoked

role as protector of the city and church, and the emperor as primary intercessor to her sacred protection. As a timeless model of and for imperium, the mosaic marked a pause in the imperial procession. Below this scene of imperial intercession, according to the *Book of Ceremonies*, the emperor was divested of his crown before crossing the threshold into the narthex where the patriarch and his retinue awaited.¹²⁸ By removing the crown, the emperor signaled a temporary abandonment of his temporal authority in acknowledgment of his entrance into the sacred space and domain of the patriarch. For Dagron, the crown suggests a further level of significance related to the Last Judgment. By removing the crown at this moment in the ceremonial entrance, he writes, “the emperor was recognizing that the delegated power which he had personally received from God ceased wherever God had his residence on earth, just as it would cease when Christ returned, on the Last Day, the Day of Judgment. The crown was on loan.”¹²⁹

Upon crossing from the vestibule to the narthex, the emperor joined the patriarch and his retinue. After venerating the Gospel Book held in the hand of the archdeacon, he greeted and kissed the patriarch, and they processed together to the “Imperial Doors,” the central and tallest of the entrances leading from the narthex into the body of the church, which supported a second lunette mosaic, equally idealized but much more enigmatic. This image represents an unnamed emperor – bearded, crowned, and nimbate – in deep *proskynesis* before Christ seated on a jeweled throne holding a book

as comparanda for the lost bronze monument. While the mosaic does allow us to reconstruct a partial image of the monument in our minds, I am more interested in the connection between the two images of imperial city donation as a means of thinking through how the later monument casts the new Palaiologan emperor – how through references to other symbolically charged imperial images in critical areas of the Great Church, it presents a new imperial ideal for a new era. A later image of a city model in a scene of offering exists on an ivory *pyxis* in Dumbarton Oaks. Here the model of the city is being presented to an emperor, not by an emperor. See *BFP*, 30–1 (cat. no. 5) with bibliography. This *pyxis* and its historical context will be discussed at greater length in the Introduction to Part II. Recent literature on the southwest vestibule mosaic includes: Prinzing, “Das Bild Justinians I,” 6–14; Kateryna Kovalchuk, “The Founder as a Saint: The Image of Justinian I in the Great Church of St Sophia,” *Byzantion*, 77 (2007), 205–38, on the hagiographic background of Justinian in this image; and Brubaker, “The Visualization of Gift Giving,” 46–52, with regard to gift-giving strategies at play here.

¹²⁸ The fact that the patriarch was already installed in the narthex highlights his role as host and the emperor as guest, a relationship emphasized earlier in the procession, when the emperor waited in the palace for a delegate of the patriarch to send the order of the ceremony to him. See Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 95–7. Ultimately the procession from palace to the Great Church, for Dagron (*Emperor and Priest*, 84), constituted “the most solemn and most significant ritual, which, each time it was repeated, described the origins and nature of imperial power, confirmed its legitimacy and suggested certain of its limitations.” See also Majeska, “The Emperor in His Church,” 1–11.

¹²⁹ Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 82.

open to the Gospel of John and flanked by medallions of the Virgin and Archangel (Figure 2.17). Much debate has surrounded the identity of this emperor, but the conspicuous lack of an inscription insists on a degree of indeterminacy and suggests that the image should be read as prescriptive rather than descriptive.¹³⁰ Dagron has noted that the image of repentance surely evokes memories of historically significant imperial events, including imperial transgressions and repentance, as well as biblical precedents, such as that of David.¹³¹ Below this image of a crowned emperor in *proskynesis*, the living emperor, still divested of his crown, prayed with candle in hand and performed triple *proskynesis* before entering into the nave with the patriarch.

These two imperial mosaics of the Great Church – depicting imperial *proskynesis* and prestation – are situated at sites that mark ritual transitions in authority and are laden with memories of imperial transgression and repentance. Dagron has read the ceremony enacted in these liminal zones as central to the inscription of imperial and patriarchal authority, and to the ritual negotiation of imperial charismata. At the same time, these spaces were also key sites of penitence and judgment in their own right,¹³² and these associations, I believe, also inform the ideological message of the Palaiologan bronze monument.

The narthex and vestibules of Hagia Sophia were the meeting place of the *ekkleziekdikoi*, the tribunal (*ekdikeion*) of clerics (*ekdikoi* or *ekkleziekdikoi*) assigned to the Great Church, an institution inaugurated by Justinian in

¹³⁰ This mosaic placed above the second threshold evokes more explicitly than the first the concept of entreaty, as the gestures of the Virgin and the emperor doubly articulate intercession. See Grabar, *L'Iconoclisme byzantin*, 239–41; Zaga Gavrilović, “The Humiliation of Leo VI the Wise,” *CA*, 28 (1979), 87–94; and A. Schminck, “Rota tu volubilis: Kaisermacht und Patriarchenmacht in Mosaiken” in L. Burgmann, M.-T. Fögen, and A. Schminck (eds.), *Cupido Legum* (Frankfurt, 1985), 211–34. The unusual iconography and the conspicuous lack of identifying imperial inscription have generated much scholarly debate. See also Cormack, “Mother of God in Hagia Sophia,” 114–16, who characterizes it as the most complex of the Great Church’s mosaics. Much of the literature has focused on the identity of the emperor – on this, see Oikonomides, “Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic,” 151–72, followed by Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 114–24, with bibliography. Brubaker offers a particularly compelling and convincing intervention in “Gifts and Prayers,” which includes an overview of previous interpretations.

¹³¹ Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 114–24.

¹³² For an overview, see Vasileios Marinis, “Defining Liturgical Space” in Stephenson (ed.), *The Byzantine World*, 284–302; and Vasileios Marinis, “Some Notes on the Functional Approach in the Study of Byzantine Architecture: The Case of Constantinople” in A. McGehee, R. Bork, and W. W. Clark (eds.), *New Approaches to Medieval Architecture* (Aldershot, 2011), 21–33, and his detailed analysis of the Lips monastery, “Tombs and Burials in the Monastery *tau Libos* in Constantinople,” *DOP*, 63 (2009), 147–66.



Figure 2.19 Seal of the *ekklesiekdikoi*, Dumbarton Oaks

the sixth century. While the tribunal's responsibilities remain unclear in the earlier period, by the middle Byzantine era, these ecclesiastical judges held sessions in the vestibules of Hagia Sophia for granting asylum among other things.¹³³ A corpus of seals ranging in date from the eleventh through the fourteenth century is associated with this tribunal. Despite slight variation, the seals consistently depict the standing figures of Justinian and the Virgin holding between them a model of the Great Church (Figure 2.19). The seals of the *ekklesiekdikoi* employ *mise-en-abyme* imagery to convey visually the status of Justinian, venerable emperor from the past, as founder of the *ekklesiekdikoi*, which met in the narthex and vestibule of the early Byzantine church he built. The imagery of the seals surely cites the mosaic in the

¹³³ John Cotsonis, "The Virgin and Justinian on Seals of the 'Ekklesiekdikoi' of Hagia Sophia," *DOP*, 56 (2002), 41–55; and John W. Nesbitt and Nicolas Oikonomides (eds.), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art V* (Washington DC, 2005), 88–9 with bibliography. Macrides traces how a murderer seeking asylum in the Great Church, for example, was to stand for fifteen days before the Beautiful Gate begging forgiveness of those entering and leaving the church, then was to make a confession before the tribunal, and then was assigned a written semeioma for penances to expiate the sin – Ruth Macrides, "Killing, Asylum and the Law in Byzantium," *Speculum*, 63 (1988), 515–16 [repr. *Kinship and Justice in Byzantium, 11th–15th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1999)]. Macrides, "The Ritual of Petition," 36, notes that the emperor's dispensation of justice was not bound to a specific place.

vestibule of Justinian offering the model of the Great Church to the Virgin. In all the *ekklesiekdikoi* seals, the sacred edifice lies squarely between the sacred and imperial figures. In some instances, the church is supported by both of the Virgin's hands, while in others, Justinian bears it with only one hand and his other is raised in supplication. The seal effectively communicates the authority of the tribunal: the Virgin acts as intercessor for their decisions,¹³⁴ Justinian is commemorated as founder, and Hagia Sophia is the site and emblem of their authority.

In addition to the ritual import of these liminal zones of the Great Church for the negotiation of the contours of the imperial office, they also bear associations of judgment and penitence. Above the thresholds of these charged spaces are representations of imperial *proskynesis* and prestation, which are echoed in the design of Michael's bronze monument erected at the Church of the Holy Apostles. The visual references to the Great Church should not be seen as mere generic invocations of sacro-imperial authority, but rather they assume specific urgency in light of the fragility of the imperial office during Michael's rule, especially given the fact that he spent most of his reign in excommunication and unable to participate fully in the liturgy inside Hagia Sophia.

Dimiter Angelov has read one of Holobolos's imperial orations as propaganda in support of repealing the emperor's excommunication.¹³⁵ One oration, which addresses Michael as a New Constantine and also compares him to King David, was delivered sometime between 1265 and 1267 – the years, that is, between the ousting of Patriarch Arsenios and the lifting of the emperor's excommunication. Given the heinousness of his actions, the emperor needed rhetorical support for the pardoning of his sin. Holobolos's oration takes up this challenge by presenting Michael as a New David. Even aside from the content of the speech, the very commissioning of the oration from Holobolos can be seen as part of the ethos of forgiveness during the brief patriarchate of Germanos III (1265–6). After all, as Angelov has argued, the very reappointment of Holobolos was an act of forgiveness; the orator stood as living testimony of mercy. He had been exiled and mutilated for voicing objections to the abuse of the young Laskarid, and he received

¹³⁴ The Virgin on the seal may allude to the apse image at the core of the Great Church, but primarily it evokes her role as intercessor in relation to the actions and decision of the *ekklesiekdikoi*, as John Cotsonis has argued.

¹³⁵ Angelov, "Confession," 203–4: "The propaganda of Michael VIII, which grappled to find arguments in support of the emperor's pardon by the Church, found a popular model of royal repentance and forgiveness, and placed Palaiologos within the venerable tradition of Old Testament sacral rulership."

not only pardon but also a promotion to the post of rhetor (*rhetor ton rhetoron*).¹³⁶

Germanos III's patriarchate also seems to have been a significant moment for the public performance of gift-giving. According to Pachymeres, it was Germanos who first called Michael by the New Constantine epithet when he commissioned the *peplos* of the emperor in the guise of Constantine to be hung between porphyry columns at the western end of Hagia Sophia.¹³⁷ The emperor, in turn, offered a gift to the patriarch, another image to be displayed in the Great Church. It represented the current patriarch alongside the two previous patriarchs named Germanos.¹³⁸ This three Germanoi representation was to be displayed at the "Beautiful Doors," the symbolically charged site where the emperor removed his crown before meeting the patriarch during the ceremonial entrance into the Great Church on major feast days. The image of Germanos III alongside the first and second patriarchs of that name establishes a visual genealogy of sacred authority. This ingenious gift thus emphasized the legitimate continuation of patriarchal authority. The second Germanos had been Deacon of Hagia Sophia at the time of the crusader conquests of 1204. He was then appointed patriarch in exile at Nicaea in 1223 and, in Alice-Mary Talbot's words, "was a strong proponent of the Nicene claim to be the sole legitimate Byzantine successor state and emphasized his own authority as ecumenical patriarch."¹³⁹ The second Germanos, in other words, constituted the spiritual link between pre-conquest Constantinople, the Nicene Empire in exile, and the later thirteenth-century Constantinopolitan patriarch appointed by Michael.

¹³⁶ On Holobolos and his imperial orations, see notes in the previous chapter. Again, as a result of Holobolos's objections to the blinding of John IV Laskaris, the orator had his nose and lips mutilated, and he withdrew to a monastery. In 1265, after the deposition of Arsenios, he returned to court life and was appointed to the newly created position of rhetor (*rhetor ton rhetoron*), a post intended to revive older pre-1204 panegyric customs. It was on Christmas Day of that year that Holobolos delivered the first of his three annual imperial orations hailing Michael as the New Constantine. He remained in the emperor's service until 1273, when his anti-Union stance got him exiled from the city again, to return to Constantinople only after the death of Michael VIII.

¹³⁷ See earlier discussion.

¹³⁸ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), IV, 675:29–677:4. Pachymeres gives few details as to what either of these lost images might have actually looked like and he even neglects to mention the medium of the Germanoi representation. Given that Germanos's original commission was a textile, it is tempting to see the Germanoi representation as woven as well, although ultimately this must remain conjectural. Macrides assumes that the image was an icon: "The New Constantine," 25 n. 63.

¹³⁹ Alice-Mary Talbot, "Germanos II," *ODB*. See also Macrides, "From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi," 273.

Keeping in mind the program of the Great Church, in which emperors are depicted in acts of donation and supplication at key junctures of the ceremonial enactment of authority and zones of penitence, we should view the display of these lost *peploi* as a politics of patriarchal and imperial authority played out in visual form. Each image links its protagonist to authorities from the past: Michael once again to Constantine, and Germanos to the two previous eponymous patriarchs from the eighth and thirteenth centuries. Both these *peploi* also served to bolster the public image of the patriarch and emperor. Germanos was an unpopular successor to Arsenios and the strategy of portraying him alongside previous patriarchs of the same name creates a sense of natural and logical succession of sacerdotal authority. At a time when the emperor was still awaiting the lifting of his excommunication, the commissioning of Germanos's textile should be read as an attempt to ingratiate himself with the patriarch by offering a gift that would help improve Germanos's image and consequently help his own cause.¹⁴⁰ Each image conveys authority through an appeal to the past and each displays its message of genealogy prominently in the sacred center of Hagia Sophia; in addition, much like Holobolos's oration, each image should be viewed within the context of Michael's agenda to win the favor of the patriarch.

A similar motivation should be ascribed to the Palaiologan bronze monument, with its encoded associations of repentance. The precise date and circumstances of its commission, however, remain unclear. Alice-Mary Talbot, whose work on Michael's restoration of Constantinople remains authoritative, suggests that it was probably made toward the end of his reign, with a *terminus ante quem* of 1280, the date of the typikon for the monastery of Saint Michael on Mount Auxentios.¹⁴¹ Thomas Thomov, on the other hand, proposes a date in the earlier period of Michael's rule, specifically between 1261 and 1274, that is, to the period between the reconquest of the city and the Council of Lyons, when Michael agreed to a Union of the Greek and Latin Churches, a decision that resulted in his fall from favor. This argument assumes that the monument would not have been erected while the emperor's popularity was in question.¹⁴² Upon closer scrutiny, this logic does not hold up. Michael may have commissioned such a monument precisely because he had fallen from favor, as a means of reminding

¹⁴⁰ On the reasons for Germanos III's need for public image building, see Macrides, "The New Constantine," 25 n. 64.

¹⁴¹ Talbot, "Restoration," 258.

¹⁴² Thomov, "The Last Column," 83: "it could not have been set up in the 1274–1280 period, when the Emperor was rather unpopular for his church policy."

the people of Constantinople of his role as restorer of the city and of his piety and repentance. In fact, most of his rule was contentious. Despite his restoration of Constantinople, he spent his first five years as emperor excommunicated and trying to win the favor of the patriarch. Without ascribing a particular date to the monument, it seems much more likely that the very contentiousness of his reign necessitated the commission of precisely such a larger-than-life bronze monument of thanksgiving.

Conclusion: monumental afterlives and memories

This chapter has argued that Michael's bronze monument reconfigured specific visual citations in the service of a new imperial image for an era of contested imperial authority. Unlike more generic scenes of imperial generosity, the Palaiologan emperor was depicted with the city he reconquered, his major accomplishment, in his hands, offering it to his patron, namesake, and leader of the heavenly hosts. Along with its location at the Church of the Holy Apostles, it thus conveyed in an immediately recognizable manner a sense of Michael as a New Constantine. At the same time, through the imagery of gift-giving and the ritual pose of *proskynesis*, the monument linked him to key images of imperial intercession at Hagia Sophia and related biblical precedents such as Joshua and David. These references to the spaces of imperial ceremonial and penance of the Great Church take on more urgency in light not only of the emperor's rise to power but also his ongoing struggles with the patriarchate and his divisive ecclesiastical policies for which he would eventually be condemned. In this way, the monument underscores imperial repentance, a dominant theme in court oratory of the time. Both panegyric and visual arts were commissioned as compensation for Michael's fundamentally fraught reign.

Despite the importance of this monument for proclaiming Michael as the city's pious (re)founder, by the fifteenth century, the identity of the bronze figures had become confused. Later visitors to the city identified the emperor as Constantine the Great, as noted earlier. The reasons for this misidentification are easy to understand. For one, details of the sculptural group may not have been legible to viewers: it was installed high up on a column, far from the viewer, a format better suited for a single-figure sculpture (as is the case with Constantine or Justinian's monumental bronze effigies). Moreover, given the iconography of offering the city, it seems like a fair mistake to read the protagonist as Constantine the Great, a mistake that might have actually pleased Michael given his concerted efforts to be

associated with the city's first founder.¹⁴³ In a city onomastically identified with its founder, it is no wonder that later visitors would see Constantine throughout the city. The imperial rider of Justinian's equestrian statue was later understood to represent Constantine as well.¹⁴⁴

Michael's legacy was irrevocably marred by his submission of the Byzantine Church to Rome at the Council of Lyons of 1274.¹⁴⁵ While the reputation of a Byzantine emperor could survive usurpation, and biblical models of repentance and mercy offered rhetorical precedent, a transgression of faith so great could not be overcome. Michael died in disgrace, excommunicated, and was buried unceremoniously in Selymbria, not in the capital he had reconquered, let alone the resting place of the city's first founder in front of which stood his bronze monument.¹⁴⁶ With the emperor's contentious legacy, his public monument would later be reconceptualized and, given its iconography and location, it became understood as the first Constantine.

Over time, the *peplos* of Michael as New Constantine that was commissioned by Germanos for Hagia Sophia also came to be understood as representing the older Constantine, but the textile was intentionally altered in an act of *damnatio memoriae*. Pachymeres tells us that in 1306 Patriarch Athanasios had the cloth portrait of Michael changed to

¹⁴³ As Talbot, "Restoration," 260, puts it: "One suspects that Michael Palaiologos, who so longed to be compared with Constantine the Great for his work in reconstructing Constantinople, would not have been upset by this popular misconception."

¹⁴⁴ Macrides, "Constantinople: The Crusaders' Gaze," 201. The Justinianic monument was also identified as Heraclius by Robert of Clari.

¹⁴⁵ On the Second Council of Lyons, see A. Papadakis, "Lyons, Second Council of," *ODB*; V. Laurent and J. Darrouzès, *Dossier grec de l'Union de Lyon 1273–1277* (Paris, 1976); Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 258–304; Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers: A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1958); D. M. Nicol, "The Byzantine Reaction to the Second Council of Lyons, 1274," *Studies in Church History*, 7 (1971), 113–46 [repr. *Byzantium: Its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World* (London, 1971), article VI]; J. Gill, "The Church Union of the Council of Lyons (1274) Portrayed in Greek Documents," *OCP*, 40 (1974), 5–45; and L. Pieralli, "La corrispondenza diplomatica tra Roma e Costantinopoli nei secoli XIII e XIV" in *Byzance et le monde extérieur* (Paris, 2005), 151–63. The decisions of the Council of Lyons were officially repudiated in 1285 when Michael died. See Papadakis, "Local Council of 1285," *ODB*. The possibility of union with Rome pre-dated the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople. A Nicaean embassy was sent to Rome in the 1250s to discuss union with Pope Innocent IV in exchange for Constantinople, and, as Angelov points out, Patriarch Arsenios was a participant in that delegation. See Dimiter Angelov, "Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium" in Dimiter Angelov (ed.), *Church and Society in Late Byzantium* (Kalamazoo, 2009), 114 with bibliography at 151.

¹⁴⁶ According to Talbot, "Restoration," 255, he was "unceremoniously laid to rest in the monastery of Christ the Savior in Selymbria." See Paul Magdalino, "Byzantine Churches of Selymbria," *DOP*, 32 (1978), 314–15; and Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," 225–7.

Constantine.¹⁴⁷ Exactly how this was accomplished remains unclear, but it is safe to assume that at the very least, the inscription would have been changed.¹⁴⁸ The same patriarch who demoted Michael from New to Old Constantine also destroyed the *peplos* of the three Germanoi entirely. In response to Michael's pro-western policies, the patriarch erased the memory of the emperor and his patriarch.¹⁴⁹ Athanasios's acts of defilement were deliberate and specific, reminding us that over time, monuments could be creatively recast for different purposes. As these very deliberate actions suggest, the rewriting of a monument's identity does not necessarily signal ignorance of its original intention. Ruth Macrides notes that "statues in the capital were identified variously, at different times, and that their meanings could be reinterpreted, depending on circumstances. Neither the identification of a statue, nor its meaning was constant."¹⁵⁰

Not only were the identities of the protagonists of the two bronze monuments still standing in the later Byzantine period often thought to represent Constantine, but their locations too were later confused and even conflated. Hajji 'Abd Allah, an Arab traveler to the city, later described the exterior of Hagia Sophia as having two columns ("minarets") supporting two bronze monuments:

On the top of one of them there is a brazen horse, but hollow; on its back sits a rider in the form of a man from hollow cast bronze. In one of his hands he holds a globe from bronze, the biggest in the world, which is also hollow, and raises his other hand. On the other minaret is the figure of a man, hollow and brazen; he kneels

¹⁴⁷ Athanasios was Patriarch of Constantinople from 1289 to 1293 and from 1303 to 1309. See Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), IV, 675:32–677, plus notes 90–92. The full passage is translated by Papamastorakis as follows: "[Athanasios] destroyed the depiction of the three patriarchs who bore the name Germanos, which stood to the right of the Beautiful Gate, because the last of these who had come to Constantinople from Orestia collaborated as an ambassador in the peace with the Italians. And the imperial portrait set up in honor of Michael VIII, made with gold thread on a purple peplos which he [Germanos III] as patriarch had suspended in Hagia Sophia between the two red columns to the west in order to laud [the emperor], appearing to the Romans in the guise of a new Constantine, this was altered by [Athanasios] into a depiction of the ever-glorious Constantine [the Great]. And these things that previously were held in esteem by the patriarch, at least superficially, were now altered as if by accident, like breaking a plate."

¹⁴⁸ Papamastorakis, "Tampering with History," 207–8, points out that this act of destruction and vandalization occurred later, a full quarter of a century after Michael's death in 1282. See Talbot, "Athanasius," *ODB*.

¹⁴⁹ The episode related by Pachymeres also suggests that both *peploi* were on display until 1306, which is interesting in and of itself.

¹⁵⁰ Macrides, "Constantinople: The Crusaders' Gaze," 202.

on both knees, has a globe in his hand and a flat head covering on which there are pearls from glass, jewels and other things.¹⁵¹

The text clearly references both Justinianic and Palaiologan imperial bronze monuments but places them both in front of the Great Church. Similarly, two Russian pilgrims, in their description of Justinian's monument, add that there were "three pagan kings, also bronze and on columns, kneeling before the emperor Justinian and offering their cities into his hands."¹⁵² Cyril Mango attributes this to legend rather than reality, which is likely, but it is equally probable that the legend grew out of a conflation of the two major bronze monuments still standing in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. In making sense of the iconography of a kneeling figure offering a city, perhaps the pilgrims assumed the subordinate figure to be a barbarian and the standing figure to be an emperor. This would accord well with more traditional Byzantine iconography, such as the Barberini Ivory, the base of the obelisk of Theodosius, or the Psalter of Basil II (Figures 2.9, 2.10, and 2.13). Then in a later transformation the gift-bearing figure was multiplied and associated with the three kings bearing offerings.¹⁵³

While we have no information about how Michael's bronze monument finally met its end,¹⁵⁴ we do know that Justinian's equestrian sculpture was ultimately melted down, a common fate of bronze monuments, in the fifteenth century.¹⁵⁵ The early Byzantine monument had famously

¹⁵¹ A. Berger, "Sightseeing in Constantinople: Arab Travelers, c. 900–1300" in Macrides (ed.), *Travel in the Byzantine World*, 190. Berger points out that the location of the kneeling man monument might have become confused in the transmission of Hajji 'Abd Allah's report to the later al-Ghazari chronicle. Hajji 'Abd Allah lived in Constantinople for twelve years before returning to Damascus in 1293, where his story became part of the al-Ghazari chronicle, aka al-Dimashqi (1260–1338).

¹⁵² Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 136, 184; Anonymous Description of 1390 and Zosima of 1419–21; Mango, "The Columns of Justinian and His Successors," 3.

¹⁵³ Mango, "The Columns of Justinian and His Successors," 12, suggests that there were originally kneeling barbarian kings and one of these figures was reused for the sculpture of Michael in *proskynesis*.

¹⁵⁴ We do know about the fate of the monument's site, the Church of the Holy Apostles. It was dismantled for Mehmed's "New Mosque." See Speros Vryonis, "Byzantine Constantinople and Ottoman Istanbul: Evolution in a Millennial Imperial Iconography" in Irene A. Bierman, Rifa'at A. Abou-El-Haj, and Donald Preziosi (eds.), *The Ottoman City and its Parts: Urban Structure and Social Order* (New Rochelle, 1991), 13–52, and the insightful reading of the early Ottoman urban transformation of Constantinople by Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, especially 66–92.

¹⁵⁵ Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror and the Equestrian Statue," 305–13, has presented a picture of the final years of Justinian's equestrian monument, proposing a plausible scenario for how

come to be seen as a talisman of the city and, in the words of Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, “one of the most potent imperial symbols of Byzantium.”¹⁵⁶ As such, it was taken down soon after the Ottoman conquest of the city. In 1471 Angiolello claims that the Sultan removed it because his astrologers advised him that as long as it stood, Christians would have the power to oppose Muslims.¹⁵⁷ Apparently the globus fell from Justinian’s hands and it was later interpreted as the fall of an empire.¹⁵⁸ Between the conflation of monuments and prophesies about the fall of empires, neither bronze imperial monument was destined to survive. Bronze signaled hallowed greatness and monumentality, but it was also fundamentally ephemeral because of its potential for repurposing.

Returning to Pachymeres’s description of Michael’s monument, the historian tells us that as a consequence of an earthquake in the summer of 1296, the bronze model of the city fell from the emperor’s hands: “this

the statue was removed from its pedestal and installed in the imperial Saray, where Pierre Gilles took detailed measurements of it. It was presumably at this time that the cross that surmounted the Column of Constantine was also taken down.

¹⁵⁶ Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 152.

¹⁵⁷ Giovan Maria Angiolello, *Viaggio di Negroponte* (Vicenza, 1982), 27: “Ancora, per mezzo la porta di santa Sofia, vi è una colona lavorata di pezzi, assai alta, sopra la quale era l’immagine di santo Agostino, fatta di bronzo, la quale fu levata via dal Gran Turco perchè dicevano li suoi astrologhi ed indovini che, insino che la detta statua di sant’Agostino starà sopra la detta colona, li cristiani sempre averano possanza contra macometani; e così fu levata via la detta colona.” As Raby explains in “Mehmed the Conqueror,” 307, the statue of St Augustine must be a conflation with the location of the statue in the Augustaion.

¹⁵⁸ In the early Ottoman period, it served as a memorial of fallen empires. The orb was interpreted as an apple, which fell to the ground as sign of the fall of the empire. See Stéphane Yerasimos, “De l’arbre à la pomme: La généalogie d’un thème apocalyptique” in Benjamin Lellouch and Stéphane Yerasimos (eds.), *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople: Actes de la Table ronde d’Istanbul (13–14 avril 1996)* (Paris, 1999), 153–92. See the following discussions of antique statuary and columns and prophesy: Helen Saradi-Mendelovici, “Christian Attitudes Toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries,” *DOP*, 44 (1990), 47–62; Sarah Bassett, “The Antiques of the Hippodrome of Constantinople,” *DOP*, 45 (1991), 85–96; Bassett, *The Urban Image*; Macrides, “Constantinople: The Crusaders’ Gaze,” 203–4; Finbarr B. Flood, “Image against Nature: Spolia as Apotropaia in Byzantium and the dar al-Islam,” *Medieval History Journal*, 9(1) (2006), 143–66; and Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 169–77. Even before the fall of Constantinople, it bore similar associations. Pero Tafur, XVII, who visited Constantinople between 1435 and 1439, relates that Justinian’s monument, the protagonist of which is not surprisingly interpreted as Constantine, was an omen: “This knight, they say, is Constantine, and that he prognosticated that from that quarter which he indicated with his finger would come the destruction of Greece, and so it was.” The key sources on Christian perceptions of the pagan antiquities of Constantinople include Cyril A. Mango, “Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder,” *DOP*, 17 (1963), 55–74; and Liz James, “Pray Not to Fall into Temptation and Be on Your Guard’: Pagan Statues in Christian Constantinople,” *Gesta*, 35 (1996), 12–20.

statue, I say, lost its head and the City slipped out of the Emperor's hands, and both fell to the ground."¹⁵⁹ The subject of Pachymeres's description is the earthquake, not the sculpture, and he reads the devastating force of nature as an omen presaging a Venetian attack on the imperial city that occurred one week later.¹⁶⁰ It is tempting to also see in it a portent of the ultimate fate of the emperor, if not the empire. Despite the position of *proskynesis*, signaling a chain of associations in the mind of the viewer to imperial and biblical humility, the historian was writing from a position of hindsight. Pachymeres, born in Nicaea and a member of the patriarchal administration in Constantinople, was extremely critical of the first Palaiologan emperor. His description of the bronze city and imperial head falling to the ground serves to distance Michael from his son and successor, Andronikos II, who restored the monument – a material renovation that serves as an apt metaphor for a larger ideological project of restoration. However, Andronikos's task was not the rebuilding program of a capital city, but rather the restoration of Orthodoxy after the unionate policy of his father. Recall that the 1261 restoration of Constantinople was described by Pachymeres as a release from enslavement and a return to order. Andronikos would be celebrated in his panegyric as a New Zorobabel like his father, although not for liberating the city from the Latin occupation, but rather from the shackles of his father's unionate policy.

¹⁵⁹ Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 246. The passage reads as follows: ἐς πόδας δ' ἔχων τὸν ἄνακτα Μιχαήλ, τὴν πόλιν φέροντα κάκείνῳ προσανατιθέντα καὶ τὴν ταύτης φυλακὴν ἐπιτρέποντα, ὁ τοιοῦτος οὐκ ἀνδριάς καὶ ἡ ἀνὰ χεῖρας τῷ βασιλεῖ πόλις, ὁ μὲν τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀφαιρεῖται, ἡ δὲ τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ κρατοῦντος ἐξολισθαίνει, καὶ πρὸς γῆν ἄμφω πίπτουσι. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), III, 261:1–5.

¹⁶⁰ Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 111.

3 | Imperial instrumentality: the serially struck Palaialogan image

Unlike Michael VIII's silk and bronze commissions, which have been read as singular iterations of diplomatic desire and commemorative thanksgiving, imperial coinage replicated and disseminated the emperor's image far and wide. Coinage, as the very medium of economic exchange, raises questions about the longstanding dichotomy between gifts and commodities. According to traditional anthropological and political economic studies, gifts are understood as inalienable, unquantifiable, and cyclical, whereas commodities are multiple, priced, and terminal; the action of giving mediates entangled networks of relations such as kinship, whereas commercial transactions leave their agents free and independent.¹ Further, gifts carry the burden of ambiguity, even contradiction: they must disguise their indebtedness in order to appear freely given. Marcel Mauss summarized this contradiction with a numismatic metaphor: "society always pays itself in the counterfeit coin of its dream."² For Mauss, a gift conceals its transactional

¹ The gift-commodity debate finds its clearest articulation in the studies of Polanyi and Sahlins, and is most forcefully set out as a dichotomy by Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities*; Mark Osteen, "Gift or Commodity?" in Mark Osteen (ed.), *The Question of the Gift: Essays Across Disciplines* (London, 2002), 229–47; Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch, "Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange" in Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch (eds.), *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge, 1989); and Cynthia Werner and Duran Bell (eds.), *Values and Valuables: From the Sacred to the Symbolic* (Walnut Creek, 2004). Critical of the strict dichotomy between gift and commodity, recent scholars such as Arjun Appadurai have approached the problem from a temporal perspective, suggesting commodity phases through which things pass. See Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value" and Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process" in Appadurai (ed.), *Social Life of Things*, 3–63 and 63–90.

² This metaphor serves as the inspiration for David Graeber's study *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York, 2001). Note Bourdieu's celebration of the profundity of this phrase in "Marginalia," 231, which builds on his more full discussion in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977). For Bourdieu, "Marginalia," 231, this engenders "individual and collective self deception," a point that will be developed further in the Conclusion. The notion of the counterfeit is central to Derrida's critique of Mauss's reciprocity outlined in *Given Time*. See John O'Neill, "What Gives (with Derrida)?" *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2 (1999), 131–45. Michael Tratner, "Derrida's Debt to Milton Friedman," *New Literary History*, 34(4) (2003), 791–806, contextualizes Derrida's study in terms of economic historiography.

logic as a false coin. A true coin, by contrast, is unambiguously the medium of commodification. Regularity and guarantees are of utmost importance for coinage, which bears the intrinsic value of recognizable liquidity and standard weight.

In Byzantium, specie was impressed with sacred and imperial effigies as guarantors of its quality and origin. Coinage thus constitutes not merely the means of exchange but also disseminates the ideology of empire in clear legible terms. The emperor's reach and sway are mapped by the circulation of the precious metallic imprint of his image. Impressed with icons of imperial and sacred authority, coinage defines the contours of the imperial office and propagates the essence of the ideology of Byzantine imperium. Large sums of coinage were dispatched as key components of treaties of the time – such as the Treaty of Nymphaion, which included both silk and specie (*pallia* and *hyperpyra*). Within the capital, sacks of coinage were ritually distributed as salary to courtiers directly from the hand of the emperor in a gestural enactment of imperial dependence.³ A monetary offering known as the *apokombion* (ἀποκόμβιον), a heavy purse of coins, was distributed on feast days to the patriarch and church officials and was placed on the high altar of the Great Church by the emperor. The suite of mosaics installed in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia, as noted in the Introduction, depict two generations of emperors holding such bags of specie as testament to the genealogy of imperial monetary generosity (Figures 0.1–0.3). Moreover, as Henry Maguire has explained, coins were also understood as amuletic, thus assuming a far from exclusively economic role.⁴

The imagery of coinage provided a key vehicle for proclaiming and disseminating the genealogy of the imperial office. Initially Michael Palaiologos continued the numismatic traditions of his Laskarid predecessors, just as the Nicene emperors signaled continuity with their Komnenian predecessors through coinage.⁵ Michael's first gold *hyperpyron*, struck between 1259

³ See Nicolas Oikonomides, "Title and Income at the Byzantine Court" in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture*, 199–215; and Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court" in the same volume, 167–98; and the *kleterologion* of Philotheos, published as Nicolas Oikonomides (ed.), *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris, 1972).

⁴ See Maguire, "Magic and Money," 1039: "The supernatural potency of coins also reflected the special powers associated with the emperor's portrait in the Middle Ages."

⁵ While the connections to previous Nicene types have long been recognized, only with recent numismatic scholarship, including the long-awaited publication of the fifth and final volume of the catalogue of the Byzantine coins in the Dumbarton Oaks and Whittemore Collections (DOCV), have we come to a clearer understanding of the transition from Nicaea to Constantinople and Palaiologan coinage more generally. In addition to the standard works on

and 1261 in Magnesia, the mint for the Empire of Nicaea,⁶ imitates the coinage of his immediate predecessors in its depiction of enthroned Christ on the obverse and the emperor being crowned by the Virgin on the reverse.⁷ While Michael's first gold coin conforms to the design of previous Nicene rulers, which in turn follows Komnenian precedents,⁸ his second type of gold *hyperpyron*, also issued from Magnesia, departs dramatically from tradition. It shows on its reverse the emperor not being crowned by the Virgin, who appears on the obverse enthroned, but rather being presented to Christ by his angelic namesake (Figure 3.1).⁹ The presence of the emperor's namesake, however, is not the innovative aspect of this coin. He had already appeared on an eleventh-century gold coin of Michael IV (albeit a rare issue possibly struck in Thessalonike) and became relatively common on Nicene coinage after 1204.¹⁰

Palaiologan coinage by Simon Bendall, including Simon Bendall and Paul J. Donald, *The Later Palaeologan Coinage 1282–1453* (London, 1979) with additions in *Numismatic Circular*, 88 (1980), 45–7, and the review by Cécile Morrisson in *RN*, 21 (1975), 256–65, as well as the limited edition catalogue of his own private collection, *A Private Collection of Palaeologan Coins* (Wolverhampton, 1988), early Palaiologan coinage is also well represented in Philip Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), 276–318; and Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 526–47. See also the important review article by Cécile Morrisson and Simon Bendall, “Monnaies de la fin de l’empire byzantin à Dumbarton Oaks: Un catalogue de référence,” *RN*, 157 (2001), 471–93.

⁶ After 1261, the bulk of coins were struck in Constantinople, but the Magnesia mint may have continued for a few years. See *DOC IV/1*, 134 and *DOC V/1*, 57–62; and Morrisson and Bendall, “Monnaies de la fin de l’empire byzantin,” 487–8. As noted in Chapter 1, Nicaea alone of the “successor states” issued the full range of coinage denominations.

⁷ *DOC IV/2*, plate 37(1). This coin conveys divinely sanctioned imperial authority with the utmost clarity: Michael stands frontally holding in his hands a labrum and sheathed sword as the standing Virgin crowns him. This type is known from only one specimen now in Bucharest, on which see O. Iliescu, “Le dernier hyperpère de l’empire byzantin de Nicée,” *BSI*, 26 (1965), 94–9, plates 1 and 2; *DOC IV*, plate 37(1); Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, no. 1286; Morrisson, “L’hyperpère de Michel VIII,” 82; and *DOC V*, 106–7. See also J. Touratsoglou and P. Protonotarios, “Les émissions de couronnement dans le monnayage byzantin du XIII^e siècle,” *RN*, 19 (1977), 69–73. Although only one specimen survives, the same reverse iconography appears in silver copper trachea. It compares closely with Theodore II’s gold coinage (on which see *DOC IV/2*, 518–19 and plate 35). Hendy, in *DOC IV/1*, 31, notes that many issues from this period are known from only single or very few specimens.

⁸ The inscription alone allows us to distinguish Michael’s coin. Morrisson, “L’hyperpère de Michel VIII,” fig. 3, compares the *hyperpyra* of John II Komnenos (struck both in Constantinople and Thessalonike) with those of John III Vatatzes and Theodore II Laskaris.

⁹ *DOC V/2*, no. 1 (69.54) (BZC 1969.54.D2012). This is the first of three varieties of this coin type (Class II). See note 13 below for descriptions of the three classes of Michael’s Constantinopolitan gold coinage.

¹⁰ Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, no. 909. As Morrisson, “The Emperor, the Saint, and the City,” 174–5, notes, Michael and the eponymous archangel appear together on a rare nomisma histamenon of Michael IV possibly struck in Thessalonike (*DOC III*, no. 2). For later coins with Michael, see *DOC V/1*, 80.



Figure 3.1a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Magnesia: Virgin enthroned/Michael presented to Christ by St Michael (DOC V/2, no. 1), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1969.54.D2012

The novelty of this coin lies instead in the formal configuration of the three figures: the emperor is depicted on his knees, his torso upright, with hands gesturing in supplication to the right toward the seated Christ who touches the emperor's head with one hand and holds a scroll in the other; behind the imperial figure, the archangel leans in toward Christ, his wing spreading out to the left and his hand resting on the emperor's shoulder. This design constitutes the main reverse type for gold *hyperpyra* for the entire duration of Michael's reign and appears on silver and copper coins as well. Aside from being crowned by the Virgin on his first coin, the entirety of Michael's gold coinage depicts him on knee being presented to Christ. Never before had an emperor been depicted kneeling on a coin. Moreover, while this constitutes an entirely new numismatic design, a further radical change involves the obverse of Michael's gold coinage. With the reconquest of the imperial city, the obverse shifts from a depiction of the Virgin enthroned, an iconographic type with a long history, to the Virgin orans surrounded by the walls of Constantinople, an unprecedented image that is inspired directly by the 1261 Byzantine restoration of the imperial capital (Figures 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4).¹¹

¹¹ DOC V/2, nos. 2 (BZC.1.1957.4.101.D2012), 11 (BZC.1948.17.3590.D201), 18 (Whittemore Loan WH 760.D2012). This coinage type is listed as nos. 2–25. The design of this *hyperpyron* holds a privileged position in scholarship because it represents a radical departure from previous coinage. See Morrisson, "L'hyperpère de Michel VIII," 76–86, and more recently in relation to Thessalonian issues, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," 181. The obverse imagery forms the basis of the fourth chapter of Cutler, *Transfiguration*, and the reverse imagery is part of the discussion of the third chapter.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.2a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople: Virgin and the walls/Michael presented to Christ by St Michael (DOC V/2, no. 2), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1.1957.4.101.D2012



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.3a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople: Virgin and the walls/Michael presented to Christ by St Michael (DOC V/2, no. 11), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1948.17.3590.D2012

The *hyperpyron* was the only gold coin of the empire,¹² and the new iconography of the Virgin and the city walls paired with the emperor

¹² The *hyperpyron* (τὸ νόμισμα ὑπέρπυρον), literally meaning “highly refined,” had been introduced by the founder of the Komnenian dynasty, Alexios I, in the late eleventh century as a means of resuscitating the debased coinage of his predecessors. It was the “cornerstone of the reformed currency” in the words of Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 217. Thus, the *hyperpyron* replaced the gold nomisma, which since Constantine I had been the primary gold coin of the empire (*solidus* in Latin). The Komnenian gold coin maintained the same weight as the nomisma but was of a different alloy. The Palaiologan *hyperpyron* was still in theory at least the



Figure 3.4a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople: Virgin and the walls/Michael presented to Christ by St Michael (*DOC V/2*, no. 18), Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, bequest of Thomas Whittemore, 1951.31.4.1906, Dumbarton Oaks, Whittemore Loan WH 760.D2012

presented to Christ on knee constituted the coin's principal design.¹³ With the exception of the earliest issues from Magnesia, this is the only type of gold coin struck during Michael's reign. Moreover, coins of this type were not rare ceremonial issues, but were common.¹⁴ The altogether innovative

solidus-nomisma introduced by Constantine the Great, but it was much debased. See Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 215–17; Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 513–17; *DOC V/1*, 27–8; Morriison, *EHB*, 3:919; Cécile Morriison, “Les noms de monnaies sous les Paléologues” in W. Seibt (ed.), *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit* (Vienna, 1996), 152–3.

¹³ Michael's gold coinage falls into three groups. The first, struck in Magnesia and testified by the single specimen in Bucharest as mentioned above, consists of Christ enthroned on the obverse and the emperor crowned by the Virgin on the reverse (*DOC IV/2*, plate 37(1)). The second, also issued in Magnesia and represented by a handful of specimens, depicts the Virgin enthroned on the obverse and the emperor presented to Christ by the Archangel Michael on the reverse. While both these coins are relatively rare, the third, which continues the same reverse as the former paired with the Virgin and the walls on the obverse, is very common. There are two variations to this type: in one Christ holds a scroll, while in the second he holds a book. Aside from this detail (book versus scroll), the imagery is identical. The switch from scroll to book, Grierson insists, is “without iconographic significance.” Both are common and continue for the entire duration of Michael's reign. See *DOC V/1*, 106–12. Grierson has estimated that the second group of coins were struck initially in Magnesia and also for a short period in Constantinople before the shift to the third, his theory being that when the mint was moved to the newly restored capital, it continued with the same designs until the political and economic climate stabilized, at which point the new design of the obverse was introduced while the reverse was retained.

¹⁴ As Grierson points out (*DOC V/1*, 48): “Both Michael VIII and Andronicus II, despite their financial problems, were able to strike hyperpyra in substantial quantities, and their coins, with the exception of Michael VIII's earliest Magnesia issue, are today very common.” The

manner in which the emperor was portrayed on coinage therefore had a wide audience. Unlike the textile in Genoa with its very particular message about imperial generosity designed for a particular and relatively limited, not to mention foreign audience, Michael's gold coinage projects the new imperial image in serial form with a wide circulation and considerably more anonymous audience. The serialized medium of coinage in the early Palaiologan period situates the imperial image within a cycle of offering, prostration, and commemoration, and allows us to trace shifting conceptions and projections of imperium in a quickly changing later Byzantine Empire.

Taking these design innovations as a point of departure, the present chapter investigates the circulation of a new imperial image in the early Palaiologan period through coinage, the very medium of commercial and political exchange. Byzantine coinage, for Vasso Penna, constitutes both "the symbol and reflection, the foundation but also the weapon of a great empire."¹⁵ Indeed, as an imperially approved visual medium, coinage offered the optimal means of conveying and promoting imperial ideology. Mints in Byzantium were imperially controlled, at least in theory;¹⁶ not only was it the emperor's prerogative to adjust the weight and value of coinage, but regulatory control extended to the designs imprinted on coins, at least to a certain degree.¹⁷ But when the greatness of an empire is tried and tested,

so-called Istanbul hoard is thought to have had so many coins – more than 10,000 – that 20 kilos of coinage were melted down in order to maintain the price of the rest. Coinage hoards are discussed in *DOC V/1*, 12–19, with additions and corrections by Morrisson and Bendall, "Monnaies de la fin de l'empire byzantin," 482–3. See also Vasso Penna, "The Final Phase of Byzantine Coinage: Iconography, Minting, and Circulation" in Sümer Atasoy (ed.), *55th Anniversary of the Istanbul University International Byzantine and Ottoman Symposium (XVth Century)*, 30–31 May 2003 (Istanbul, 2004), 322.

¹⁵ Vasso Penna, "The Mother of God on Coins and Lead Seals" in Maria Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God*, 209, expanded slightly in Vasso Penna, *Byzantine Coinage: Medium of Transaction and Manifestation of Imperial Propaganda* (Nicosia, 2002). After 1261, he writes, coinage "was no longer an invincible weapon for the Empire itself" (107).

¹⁶ Unlike earlier periods in which coinage was struck in multiple mints around the empire, Constantinople alone minted coinage in the middle Byzantine period. In the final centuries, coins were also struck in the empire's second city Thessalonike (as well as Magnesia and Philadelphia for a limited period). See Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage*, 281; Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 443–7; and *DOC IV/1*, 102–23.

¹⁷ Even if the imperial administration could not control all aspects of supply, it at least controlled "the output of new types," according to Morrisson, *EHB*, 917. For Grierson, imperial regulatory control is harder to gauge – he is more cautious about the degree of regulation, given how little we know about precise mint operations. Morrisson, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," has framed her discussion of Thessalonian coins around the construction of identity in visual and circulateable medium, considering how Thessalonian identity is expressed by coinage and how widely it was conveyed in neighboring areas.

how does its coinage voice the tensions between long-held traditions of imperial greatness and strained contemporary realities?

This question prompts us to recognize coinage not simply as the means of exchange but as the mechanism through which an emperor proclaimed legitimacy and renewed Byzantine sovereignty. The messages on coins serially struck and widely disseminated were far from simple reflections of fluctuating imperial power, but rather were designed to negotiate the tensions of an empire newly restored but impoverished. That coinage should function as a key site for the dissemination of imperial ideology comes as no surprise; it does, however, bear a hint of irony, in that the Treaty of Nymphaion (1261) laid the groundwork for the imperial restoration of Constantinople, but it also set in motion changes to the Byzantine monetary system that contributed to its eventual collapse. In addition to silk textiles, gold coinage, trading rights, and other privileges as outlined in Chapter 1, the treaty also included a clause that opened the currency market for the first time by authorizing the export of Byzantine *hyperpyra*.¹⁸ This provision, along with the coin's gradual debasement during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, has been read by economic historians as the beginning of the decline and eventual demise of the Byzantine gold coinage.¹⁹

In what follows, analysis commences with the reverse design, since this altogether novel image was struck on Michael's first gold coinage issued in Magnesia and continues with the conquest of Constantinople. The reverse design thus forges a link between the Empire of Nicaea and the Palaiologan Empire centered in the restored imperial city. The chapter then considers the innovative iconic representation of the Virgin of the Walls on the coin's obverse, a design that begins in 1261 and continues on the gold coinage of Michael's successors, before turning to the unique iteration of imperium

¹⁸ Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 526–30; and *DOC IV/1*, 119–20. Hendy highlights the significance of this clause as the “first known breach of the late Roman and Byzantine tradition of forbidding the private export of precious metals from the empire” (120). See also the overviews by Morrisson, “Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation,” *EHB*, 3:910–66; and John Day, “A Note On Monetary Mechanisms, East and West,” *EHB*, 3:968–72; plus Penna, “The Final Phase of Byzantine Coinage,” 309–24.

¹⁹ Indicative of the “internationalization” in this period, Byzantine coins reached Venice, where they were melted down for Venetian gold ducats. A constellation of factors contributed to the eclipse of Byzantine gold, including commercial competition and domination of Italian maritime powers (the Genoese at Pera, Chios, and the Black Sea, and the Venetians throughout the Mediterranean), the impoverishment of Byzantine territories, and the introduction of gold coinage to Western Europe between 1250 and 1350, which changed the commercial ratio between gold and silver. See Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 227. The relation between the reintroduction of gold in Europe and the disappearance of gold in Byzantium remains to be fully explained.

conveyed by each side of the coin in relation to one another. A final section traces the transformation of this numismatic design on subsequent imperial coinage until gold ceased to be struck and the Byzantine *hyperpyron* became merely a money of account.

The emperor, the angel, and Christ

The depiction of the emperor being presented on knee to Christ constitutes an altogether novel numismatic configuration that forms the main reverse image for all gold coinage issued by Michael VIII (Figures 3.2–3.4a).²⁰ The imagery recalls the central scene of the embroidered *peplos* where the emperor is shown being led and guided to the church of Genoa in an obvious allusion to the pact for which the silk was created (Figure 1.3). Both early representations of Michael in silk and gold convey a sense of intimacy: in each, the leader of the heavenly hosts places a hand on the shoulder of the earthly ruler and his wing frames the emperor so as to evoke protection. Moreover, as opposed to the emphasis on stasis typical of traditional Byzantine imperial imagery where immobility and majesty serve as guiding principles, both silk and gold images exhibit a perceptible sense of movement and directionality in their imperial depiction. On the coin, the emperor's face and torso are straight, but he gestures toward the seated Christ. The archangel stands behind the emperor, his heavenly body blocked by the earthly imperial one, his hand on Michael's shoulder, and his nimbate head inclined in Christ's direction. This not only lends the composition a slight curve that echoes the circular shape of the coin but also stresses the angel as the protector, advocate, and even extension of the emperor. The positioning of Christ on the right mirrors the terrestrial and sacred Michaels. Enthroned, Christ touches the emperor's crown in a gesture that suggests blessing reminiscent of a scene of investiture.²¹

²⁰ On the distinction between obverse and reverse, see notes 47 and 67 below. See *DOC V/2*, nos. 2–25 for Michael's gold coinage struck in Constantinople. The only difference between the emperor's first gold coin struck in Magnesia and his Constantinopolitan issues is in the placement of the inscription; the imagery of the reverse is identical. On the Magnesia issue (*DOC V/2*, no. 1) an illegible inscription appears on the far left of the coin and Christ's *nominum sacrum* appears on the far right, whereas on all the gold *hyperpyra* struck in Constantinople the imperial inscription appears on the far right. This is the only significant difference between the reverse imagery of the two coins. My thanks to Jonathan Shea for this observation and for discussing various aspects of Palaiologan coinage with me.

²¹ While it is difficult to discern, Christ's hand decidedly touches the edge of the emperor's crown. One specimen in Dumbarton Oaks (*DOC V/2*, no. 18) illustrates this point very well.



Figure 3.5a–b Silver trachy of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class IV: Virgin seated/Michael presented to Christ by St Michael (*DOC V/2*, no. 29), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1948.17.3594.D2012

The reverse image thus abounds in narrative prompts. Unlike more immobile and iconic images of emperors and holy figures, this design with its legible gazes and gestures suggests a visual dialog unfolding in time. The emperor on knee beseeches Christ, backed by the leader of the heavenly hosts who intercedes on his behalf, and Christ in turn blesses Michael. With an economy of gestures and formal relationships, the reverse image ultimately presents not just movement but a full cycle of supplication – question, intercession, and response.

For the duration of his reign, Michael's gold coinage maintains this reverse image and it occurs on the reverse of select coins of other denominations as well.²² On the emperor's silver coinage, for example, Class IV silver trachea are struck with the exact reverse imagery of the gold *hyperpyron*, but paired with an obverse depiction of the Virgin enthroned, a combination that recalls the emperor's aforementioned gold coinage issued in Magnesia (Figure 3.5).²³ In copper, two different classes of trachea are struck with the main reverse imagery, the first with a bust of Christ Emmanuel on the

²² The main reverse image of the emperor's gold coinage appears on silver Class IV coinage, *DOC V/2*, nos. 29–32, and Class I and II of the copper coins, *DOC V/2*, nos. 46–55. In addition to the *DOC V*, see Simon Bendall and Paul J. Donald, "The Silver Coinage of Michael VIII," *Numismatic Circular*, 90 (1982), 121–4; and Simon Bendall and Paul J. Donald, *The Billon Trachea of Michael VIII Palaeologos, 1258–1282* (London, 1974).

²³ *DOC V/2*, no. 29 (BZC.1948.17.3594.D2012). The coin represents the same configuration as the gold coin struck in Magnesia, with the exception of the inscription on the reverse, which is placed to the right of Christ in conformity with the Constantinopolitan gold designs. See note 20 above.

obverse and the enthroned Virgin on the second.²⁴ In addition to this reverse image of the kneeling emperor presented to Christ, the silver and copper coins vary dramatically in type. At least sixteen silver and fifty copper trachea types, for example, are attested in contrast to the near-singular image of the emperor's gold coinage.²⁵

In all of Michael's coinage – the nearly singular gold and the wide variety of silver and copper coins – the emperor's saintly namesake holds a privileged position.²⁶ While Saints George, Demetrios, Theodore, Nicholas, and even Constantine all feature on the emperor's silver and bronze trachea, St Michael appears with the most frequency on issues from Constantinople.²⁷ While the gold coinage repeats the scene of presentation – and hence characterizes the heavenly figure as the emperor's advocate in a scene of intercession and presentation – other denominations align the two Michaels in more varied manners as expressions of imperial and angelic authority. On the reverse of a silver trachea, for example, the emperor and his son Andronikos are positioned frontally side by side, both on knee, while the archangel is represented bust length above them, reaching down and touching their crowns (Figure 3.6).²⁸ It is as much a scene of blessing, with

²⁴ A bust of Christ Emmanuel appears on the obverse of the first (Class I: *DOC V*/2, nos. 46–51) and the seated Virgin on the second (Class II: *DOC V*/2, nos. 52–5). See *DOC V*/1, 112–24 (Tables 8 and 9).

²⁵ One of the distinguishing features of Palaiologan coinage is the remarkable consistency in the design of the gold, in contrast to the diversity in the other denominations. This has been read as evidence for an annual change in coinage types. See Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 287; *DOC V*/1, 56; and Morrisson and Bendall, “Monnaies de la fin de l'empire byzantin,” 486.

²⁶ Again, the emperor being led to Christ constitutes the only gold coin type. Based on the data of *DOC V*, we see that on the silver and copper trachea, the archangel figures prominently in a variety of guises. Of the seventeen silver trachea types (*DOC V*, 114–15: Table 6), St Michael appears on six types: two of three types from Magnesia, three of ten types from Constantinople, and one of two types from either Magnesia or Thessaloniki. Of the sixty-seven copper trachea types (*DOC V*, 119–24: Table 9), St Michael appears on eleven of thirty-four types from Constantinople, and even in Thessalonike, where the city's patron Demetrios dominates, Michael appears on six of twenty-nine types. More discussion of Thessalonike coinage appears later in this chapter. The diversity of typology in the silver and copper coinage stands in contrast to the uniformity of the single type for gold (see note 25 above). The *DOC* list of copper and silver types will probably not prove exhaustive as more specimens are identified, but these numbers give us an idea of the relative importance (not absolute numbers/figures) of St Michael in the early Palaiologan coinage.

²⁷ In addition to Michael, George, Theodore, and Demetrios are most common, the latter understandably dominates coinage from Thessalonike. Of the thirty-four copper trachea types listed in *DOC V*/1, 119–21 (Table 9), for example, St Michael appears on eleven types, while George appears in four types. Nicholas, Theodore, and Demetrios each appear on two types, and Constantine only on one. See also *DOC V*/1, 78–81.

²⁸ *DOC V*/2, no. (36) (BZC.2009.010.D2012). An image of St George, standing with a spear and shield, occupies the obverse of this type (Class VIII). On a related image, the reverse silver



Figure 3.6 Silver trachea of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class VIII: St George/two emperors crowned by St Michael (*DOC V/2*, no. 36), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.2009.010.D2012

its associations of coronation and investiture, as it is one of presentation. All three figures face frontally, with the saint above the imperial figures offering them to the viewer.²⁹

Beyond his predominance on the emperor's coins, the relationship of the saint to the emperor is significant. In many of the coins, St Michael assumes a position of close contiguity to the imperial body and acts as agent of both protection and presentation. On Class VII copper trachea he occupies a supporting position behind the emperor, who carries a cruciform scepter and globus cruciger (Figure 3.7). Rather than touching the emperor's crown, he stands behind as a support to the imperial figure and his hand touches the emperor's shoulder.³⁰ On another coin, Class IV copper trachy, he even

trachea of Class XVI (*DOC V/2*, no. (44)) depicts the kneeling figures of Michael VIII and Andronikos II being blessed by a bust-length image of Christ.

²⁹ On another silver coin, the emperor and saint are physically disaggregated to opposite faces of the coin, but are conceptually linked nonetheless (*DOC V/2*, no. (34)). The reverse represents the standing emperor being crowned by Christ without his saintly namesake, who instead occupies the full face of the obverse dressed in imperial regalia, which mirrors that of the emperor. Although separated from the imperial body, the regalia serves to draw the leader of the heavenly hosts and the terrestrial ruler into clear analogy.

³⁰ Grierson, *DOC V/2*, no. 70 (BZC.1960.88.4328.D2012); and Bendall and Donald, *Billon Trachea*, C.9 (with line drawing), describe the emperor as "supported by" the heavenly figure behind.



Figure 3.7 Copper trachea of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople. Class VII: bust of St Demetrios/Emperor Michael VIII with St Michael above (*DOC V/2*, no. 70), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1960.88.4328.D2012



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.8a–b Copper trachea of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class IV: Virgin seated/emperor embraced by St Michael (*DOC V/2*, no. 62), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1977.19.D2012

embraces the emperor (Figure 3.8). Here the emperor faces frontally holding one hand to his chest and carrying an *akakia* in the other, while the saint reaches his arm around and behind him.³¹ This configuration is related

³¹ *DOC V/2*, no. 62 (BZC.1977.19.D2012). Class IV: *DOC V*, nos. 59–63. This same reverse configuration occurs on the emperor's Class II silver trachea (*DOC V/2*, no. (27)), which is

to the main Constantinopolitan gold reverse imagery in its close physical contact between the angel and emperor. Rather than guiding the imperial figure or directing him, this image expresses the close association of the two through the intimate gesture of both support and presentation. In certain other coins struck in Thessalonike, the emperor is even depicted with wings, having morphed entirely with the leader of the heavenly hosts.³²

Although the emperor appears alongside many saints, the direct physical interaction and intimacy exhibited by these coins is reserved for St Michael alone.³³ Moreover, while on many coins Christ and the Virgin crown and bless the emperor,³⁴ only Michael embraces or supports him. This is the key point to emerge from a survey of the diverse coinage types across denominations. This closeness parallels textual sources such as the Mount Auxentios typikon, where Michael stresses the vigilance of the archangel as his guardian who took him to his side in the face of danger.³⁵

Throughout Michael VIII's diverse coinage designs, St Michael appears as both warrior and archangel. Grierson reminds us that these alternate roles are kept relatively distinct from one another.³⁶ The saint consistently appears winged, but his attire changes depending on his role as archangel or military saint. As archangel, he is depicted in imperial garb, often wearing the clearly identifiable *loros* or tunic and himation, and holding a trefoil

assigned to Magnesia in 1258/9 by Bendall and followed by Grierson. In *DOC V/2*, no. (27), the iconography is described as "Emp. standing facing, clasped by St. Michael on r." The emperor on the reverse of no. 59 is described as "embraced by St. Michael."

³² Class XIV: *DOC V/2*, nos. 171–3; Class XVIII: *DOC V/2*, nos. 182 and 183. See discussion in *DOC V/1*, 67–8; and Cécile Morrisson, "L'empereur ailé dans la numismatique byzantine: Un empereur ange," *Studii și cercetări de numismatică*, 11 (1995), 191–5; Tommaso Bertelè, *L'Imperatore Allato nella Numismatica Bizantina* (Rome, 1951). Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 68; and Bendall and Morrisson, "Monnaies de la fin de l'empire byzantin," 488, introduce as comparanda the damaged fresco of the winged emperor at Didymoteichon, on which see Robert Ousterhout and Athanasios Gouridès, "Ένα βυζαντινό κτίριο δίπλα στον Άγιο Αθανάσιο Διδυμοτείχου," *Το Αρχαιολογικό έργο στη Μακεδονία και τη Θράκη*, 5 (1991), 518–21. See also Henry Maguire, "Style and Ideology" and "Murderer among the Angels: The Frontispiece Miniatures of Paris. Gr. 510 and the Iconography of the Archangels in Byzantine Art" in Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (eds.), *The Sacred Image East and West* (Urbana, 1995), 63–71.

³³ He is shown standing next to Constantine on Class VIII (nos. 71–2); St George on Class V (nos. 64–5); standing next to a military saint, possibly St Theodore, on Class IX (nos. 73–6) and half-length alongside St George on Class X (nos. 77–8).

³⁴ Michael is crowned primarily by Christ but also by St Michael on Class III bronze coinage from Thessalonike (nos. 136–9) and by an unknown military saint on the Class XII bronze Constantinopolitan issues with the Hetoimasia on the obverse. On this strange iconography and its possible relation to the 1274 Council of Lyons, see *DOC V/1*, 89 and 113. The Hetoimasia image appears only once on a silver and copper trachea.

³⁵ See the discussion in Chapter 1. ³⁶ *DOC V/1*, 80.

scepter and globe or disc.³⁷ Despite the iconographic distinction between the saint as archangel versus the saint as soldier, Grierson highlights a significant exception. There are “a few representations” of the saint as the emperor’s guardian, either presenting him or hovering above his head. In such images, he claims, the saint “is simply shown as winged and nimbate.”³⁸ The main gold reverse image, which again appears on all denominations but constitutes the only reverse image for Michael’s gold coinage, exemplifies this exception. In order to include all three figures on the coin’s diminutive face, the saint is compressed into the upper-left corner and a full understanding of his attire, whether military chlamys or imperial *loros*, is unclear as he is blocked by the body of the kneeling emperor. Moreover, the saint does not hold attributes of either of his roles, but instead touches the emperor. In this image the saint’s role is defined less by imperial or soldier mode and more by his relationship to the emperor. He is distinguished as the emperor’s archangelic advocate.³⁹

This advocacy supports the larger significance of the reverse design as an image of intercession. But where we would expect an intercession to be led by the Theotokos presenting the prayer of the earthbound figure to her son, here the emperor appears with his angelic advocate on knee before Christ.⁴⁰ The archangel’s hand is visible on the shoulder of the emperor in a gesture characterized as guiding, presenting, even offering. Significantly, the coin’s design presents the imperial body both to Christ, who touches the emperor’s crown in a gesture of assent, and also to the viewer, as evidenced by the parallel postures and gazes of Christ and the emperor. The image thus displays to the eyes of the viewer an image of successful prayer and

³⁷ Conforming to this rule, the Class IV silver trachy leaves no ambiguity that Michael is depicted as Archangel, head of the heavenly hosts. In other coins, typical military attire distinguishes the saint’s role as warrior and he carries the appropriate attributes of sword, spear, and/or shield. On the reverse of his Class III copper trachea, for example, the imperial and saintly figures are depicted standing together frontally holding between them a labrum, the emperor dressed in imperial regalia and the saint in clearly discernable military garb. See, for example, *DOC* V/2, nos. 56–7.

³⁸ Grierson, *DOC* V/1, 80: “Where his half- or three-quarter figure forms the whole obverse type, he is represented as an archangel; where he stands either alone (C.23, 24, 114–23, 13–14; T4, 147–50) or beside the emperor, holding with him or handing to him a long cross or similar symbol, he is always in military guise. In a few representations, however, where he figures as the emperor’s guardian, either presenting to Christ his namesake Michael VIII (C.1, 2, 46–51, 52–5; UC.1, 561), or less appropriately Andronicus II (LPC 38/7=UC.2) or hovering above his head (C.9; 70), he is simply shown as winged and nimbate.”

³⁹ This relationship parallels the imagery of the *peplos* in Genoa, where details about the iconography of the angelic body are behind the emperor and hence cannot be discerned. Recall, as noted in Chapter 1, that the angel’s feet are not visible.

⁴⁰ See discussion in Chapter 1.

intercession: the kneeling emperor, with arms in supplication and backed by his angelic advocate, simultaneously beseeches Christ and receives Christ's assent and blessing, as indicated by the touch of his jeweled crown.⁴¹ In this sense, the image constitutes a scene of investiture in that it commemorates Michael's status as emperor. As such, the coin proclaims Michael's rule. But the tone is ambiguous. Previous coins proclaimed imperial authority by representing an emperor being crowned by the Virgin or Christ – this was an ideal and easily legible visual formula for currency – but never before had a coin depicted the emperor on his knees.

The kneeling posture of the emperor then complicates our reading of the imagery. As seen in the last chapter, *proskynesis* assumed many guises, from full prostration on the ground to more general bowing of some sort. Moreover, in addition to the emperor's ceremonial entrance into Hagia Sophia on major feast days in which the emperor and patriarch performed *proskynesis* at the threshold to the naos, this gesture of submission and reverence was fully exploited by Michael at his *adventus* and was also performed in the Great Church as part of his pardon following the protracted period of his excommunication.⁴² Whereas the degree of *proskynesis* for the brazen emperor in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles remains ambiguous – again, we know he was positioned at the feet of the archangel, but cannot be sure of the degree of inclination – the precision of the posture struck on coinage allows us to consider the gestural embodiment of piety in greater detail.

Unlike the mosaic lunette of the unnamed emperor prostrate before Christ above the imperial door at Hagia Sophia (Figure 2.17), Michael's gaze on his gold coin is not directed downward in abjection. Nor does he look up beseechingly as the contemporary patron of the Urbino textile who likens himself to Joshua before the angel (Figure 2.14). Rather, he is positioned as parallel to Christ by his frontal gaze⁴³ and upright torso, decidedly not crouching down in deep supplication.⁴⁴ Until this point, representations of

⁴¹ Unlike his representation on the *peplos*, the emperor is not depicted with a halo. However, it is worth noting that the die cutters went to great care to elaborate Michael's crown in distinct detail, with visibly legible dangling *prependoulia* on each side that act as a frame in a similar manner as a halo on his coin. The punch work of the halo of Christ and archangel is paralleled by the emperor's crown. The numismatic conventions for nimbate emperors are discussed in the conclusion to this chapter.

⁴² See the discussion in Chapter 2.

⁴³ There may be a slight tilt to the emperor's head in Christ's direction, but it is not turned toward the holy figure – it is difficult to be sure from the wear/poor striking. *DOC V/2*, no. 18 is the most clear in this regard.

⁴⁴ Michael's kneeling position is distinctly different from previous images of *proskynesis*. As Grierson points out (*DOC V/1*, 68–9), both imperial kneeling and crouching become

imperial *proskynesis* were exceedingly rare, with the narthex mosaic image in the Great Church standing out as exceptional. Yet, after the interregnum, not only does the emperor appear at the feet of the archangel in a monumental public image but also on knee before Christ on the same emperor's coinage in all denominations. In fact, the coinage probably served as the immediate pictorial model for the bronze monument.⁴⁵ This new imagery emerges post-1261 in two such public monuments with large audiences: a larger-than-life monumental bronze statue that could be seen from a great distance and also on serially struck coinage that circulated far beyond the city and imperial borders. Such a proliferation of the image of the emperor on knee – not in majesty, not being crowned, not standing hieratically – stands in sharp contrast to established numismatic and artistic conventions, and this shift requires elaboration.

One explanation for this new imperial piety may be found in the particular circumstances of Michael's rise to the throne, as part of the process of crafting his legacy from usurper to restorer. But similar to the unnamed emperor in the narthex mosaic of Hagia Sophia, the imagery of Michael's coin is also strangely generic, so much so that it is repeated on the coinage of his successors, as will be discussed toward the end of this chapter. What we are seeing is the dissemination and codification of a new imperial image that draws on gestures of piety in order to proclaim just and legitimate rule. As we have seen, key biblical figures such as David and Joshua provided optimal rhetorical models for early Palaiologan emperors, especially with regard to usurpation (penitence and forgiveness) and the conquests of cities, and also drew on an iconography of *proskynesis*. This type of exemplarity is most often associated with manuscript illumination. Psalters, in particular, offer the occasion for complex analogical messages.⁴⁶ With Michael's gold coinage, we find precisely the kind of complex visual and thematic associations we might expect in typological manuscripts or court oratory,

consistent features of Palaiologan coinage, a point to which I will return in this chapter's conclusion when we turn to the gold coinage of Andronikos II Palaiologos.

⁴⁵ Both Grierson, *DOC* V, 107, and Morrisson, "L'hyperpère de Michel VIII," 85 n. 19, mention Michael's lost bronze monument when describing his gold *hyperpyron*. Even though the precise date of the bronze monument remains uncertain it was commissioned after the first striking of Michael's gold coins depicting the Virgin of the Walls. One of his copper coins depicts the emperor holding a model of the city, which will be discussed below, 182–3, in relation to Thessalonian numismatic conventions for depicting the city and its ruler.

⁴⁶ The polemical reading of the eleventh-century Vatican Psalter 752 by Kalavrezou, Trahoulia, and Sabar, "Critique of the Emperor," comes to mind most immediately with its stress on the repentance of David, who is repeatedly pictured in *proskynesis* as a veiled imperial critique according to the authors.

albeit on a more pared-down scale and in an abbreviated manner due to the numismatic format. Michael's new gold coinage narrates a nuanced message of sacred intercession, divine protection, and pious rule. This message becomes especially evident when we turn to the other face of the coin, which completes the message of imperial thanksgiving, legitimacy, and instrumentality.

The Virgin of the Walls

The innovation of the reverse design and its consistency across Michael VIII's gold coinage is matched by the obverse image, which directly evokes the Byzantine restoration of Constantinople (Figures 3.2–3.4b). The appearance of the city walls on Michael's coinage struck after 1261 represents a major departure from the iconography of his predecessors, and one that signals the reconquest of the Queen of Cities as the defining feature of his reign, serially struck and disseminated throughout the empire and beyond. This numismatic innovation merited comment from contemporary historian Pachymeres, who mentions the design in a passage well known to numismatists and economic historians, as it relates to the debasement of the *hyperpyra* in the thirteenth century.⁴⁷ In need of funds after the Byzantine restoration of the city, in particular to pay the Italians, the historian reports, the emperor not only replaced the ancient or traditional symbols (τῶν παλαιῶν σημείων) on the coinage with an image of the city but also reduced the coin's gold content.⁴⁸ While Pachymeres was writing in

⁴⁷ Pachymeres, *De Michaelē et Andronico Palaeologis* (Bekker, ed.), 494: ἐπὶ Μιχαήλ, τῆς πόλεως ἀλούσης, διὰ τὰς τότε κατ' ἀνάγκην δόσεις, καὶ μᾶλλον πρὸς Ἰταλοὺς, μετεγεγράφατο μὲν τὰ τῶν παλαιῶν σημείων, τῆς πόλεως χαραττομένης ὁπισθεν, καθυφίετο δὲ καὶ παρὰ κεράτιον τὸ ἐκ χρυσοῦ νομιζόμενον ὡς πεντεκαίδεκα πρὸς τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα γίνεσθαι. Pachymeres specifies that this new image of the city appeared on the reverse of the coin (ὁπισθεν), but for the sake of clarity and to follow current numismatic conventions, it is described as the obverse. Traditionally a coin's obverse bears the principal type, which was the ruler's effigy until Justinian II introduced the bust of Christ, at which point the imperial image was shifted to the reverse of the coin, giving precedence to Christ. See James D. Breckenridge, *The Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II (685–695, 705–711 A.D.)* (New York, 1959). As pointed out by Morrisson, "L'hyperpère de Michel VIII," 85 n. 17, and Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 65, Pachymeres's comment suggests that at the time, the contemporary viewer may have accorded greater importance to the concave face of the coin, which is where the imperial effigy is usually found. See Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 27–8; *DOC IV*, 124–5; and *DOC V/1*, 64–5, for the most succinct overview of the stakes involved. With regard to the obverse of this particular coin, see Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 111–12.

⁴⁸ Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 44, points out that the calculations in Pachymeres's text have been generally misunderstood. Pachymeres notes that John III Vatatzes's coin was two-thirds fine

the early fourteenth century, decades after Michael's coinage was first issued, the linking of these two details is significant. The change in iconography is mentioned in the same breath as the reduction of the coin's fineness in order to defray the heavy restoration costs, and the relation between the two is linked in causal terms. The traditional symbols of previous imperial coinage were abandoned in favor of a new image of the imperial city, but the capital's restoration necessitated the debasement of the very coin to bear its visual representation.

Although Pachymeres mentions the city as the new image for the slightly debased gold coin, the city in its entirety is not, in fact, struck on this new *hyperpyron*, but rather its walls. Topographic accuracy is not at issue here, as it would be impossible to render the city or its walls in any detailed or accurate manner on a coin roughly one inch in diameter and often overstruck with the effect of obscuring the iconography. Unlike the city's surrounding fortifications still standing more or less intact today, which consist of distinct sea and land enclosures, the walls as struck in gold form a perfect and unified circle that echo the shape of the coin and are intersected by six prominent triple towers, as opposed to the ninety-six towers that punctuate the ramparts in reality. Some specimens are struck clearly enough to allow details of the parapet to be discerned, while even hatch marks are legible to suggest masonry courses (Figure 3.4). Of the six symmetrically arranged triple towers, the lower three are angled upward toward the center of the circuit wall, while the upper three extend outward toward the outer edge of the coin. This creates a curious sense of space that is at once frontal and aerial.

The tilting of the towers complicates the overall effect of a bird's-eye view, an ambiguity that should come as no surprise since standard pictorial conventions for topographic and cartographic depiction were not established. In the views of the city in Buondelmonti's *Liber insularum* we see the same

(so sixteen carats) and this remained the case for the gold coinage of his son Theodore II. But under Michael Palaiologos, because of the heavy restoration costs including subventions abroad (especially to the Italians), a new type of coin was minted that was only fifteen parts fine. Under Michael's successor, Andronikos II, gold coins were initially fourteen parts fine, but by the time that Pachymeres was writing around 1308, that coinage had been reduced again to twelve carats fine. Morrisson, *EHB*, 945, notes that even in times of extreme crisis (such as between 1325 and 1353), the gold content never went under eleven carats. The debasement of Byzantine gold in the early years of the Palaiologan period is well known. Gold coinage ceased to be struck altogether in Byzantium in the mid-fourteenth century, precisely at the moment that it began to be struck on a large scale in Europe. On the debasement of the *hyperpyron*, see Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 526–30; Penna, "Final Phase of Byzantine Coinage"; and Penna, *Byzantine Coinage*.

tilting of the wall's towers in the lower and left-hand edge of the design, while the towers of the upper limit extend upward to combine spatial depth with a more aerial view (Figures 2.5 and 2.7).⁴⁹ The two Byzantine representations of Constantinople in Vatican Greek manuscript 1851 present a less aerial perspective. Folio 2r renders the city's famed walls, which surround the Great Church and are surrounded in turn by water, as a circle with symmetrically arranged towers seen from a slightly elevated perspective (Figure 3.9). The second of the two city views in the codex, folio 5v, shows the city from a more frontal perspective: only the turrets of the front part of the wall are visible, while the farther towers are hidden entirely by the city's architecture (Figure 3.10). Both cityscapes, even though oriented differently, adopt similar pictorial conventions for conveying spatial recession and depth. The turrets in the distance are significantly smaller than those in the foreground and are blocked to varying degrees by the city's architectural edifices.⁵⁰

By contrast, the walls on Michael's coinage, despite the angling of the towers, form a complete and uninterrupted circle. Moreover, unlike the first cityscape of the Vatican manuscript with its emphasis on the Golden Gate, the ceremonial entrance to the city, which forms the focal point of the representation and is aligned with the entrance to the Great Church, the circuit walls of Michael's coin do not emphasize a point of entry. The greatest difference between the coin and other city views, of course, involves what the walls circumscribe. Unlike other representations of Constantinople, the city's famed circuit walls on Michael's gold coin do not encircle key topographies or monuments such as Hagia Sophia or the Church of the Holy Apostles, but rather a bust-length image of the orant Virgin. In many respects, the *hyperpyron's* walls appear to function as a framing device for the Virgin more than as an actual rendering of the city's fortifications. They echo not only the shape of the coin itself but also the Virgin's halo.⁵¹

⁴⁹ On the pictorial conventions and precedents for representing space, see Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 111–40. For an overview of the tradition on ancient coinage, see Martin Jessop Price and Bluma L. Trell, *Coins and Their Cities: Architecture on the Ancient Coins of Greece, Rome, and Palestine* (London, 1977).

⁵⁰ The difference between the two very different vantage points, I have suggested in "Constructing a Byzantine Augusta," has to do with their position within the larger visual narrative of the manuscript. They are each positioned at the beginning of a narrative sequence so as to situate the narrative and act as a signpost for the viewer. Barsanti, "Costantinopoli," 173, brings together Buondelmonti's map with the coinage and the Vatican manuscript.

⁵¹ Although a sense of axiality is conveyed by the vertically aligned central tower along the lower and upper edges of the coin. The angling of the towers serves less to convey distance or recession than to emphasize the Virgin orant in the center. The positioning of the central



Figure 3.9 View of Constantinople, Vatican Library, Vat. Gr. 1851, fol. 2r

Aside from the city walls, the manner in which the Theotokos is depicted is similar to the first Byzantine coin to depict the Virgin: a rare issue of Leo VI (r. 886–912), where her bust-length figure positioned with hands

towers in particular draws the torso of the Virgin into direct vertical alignment. Moreover, circuit walls echo the shape of the Virgin's halo. See Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 132.

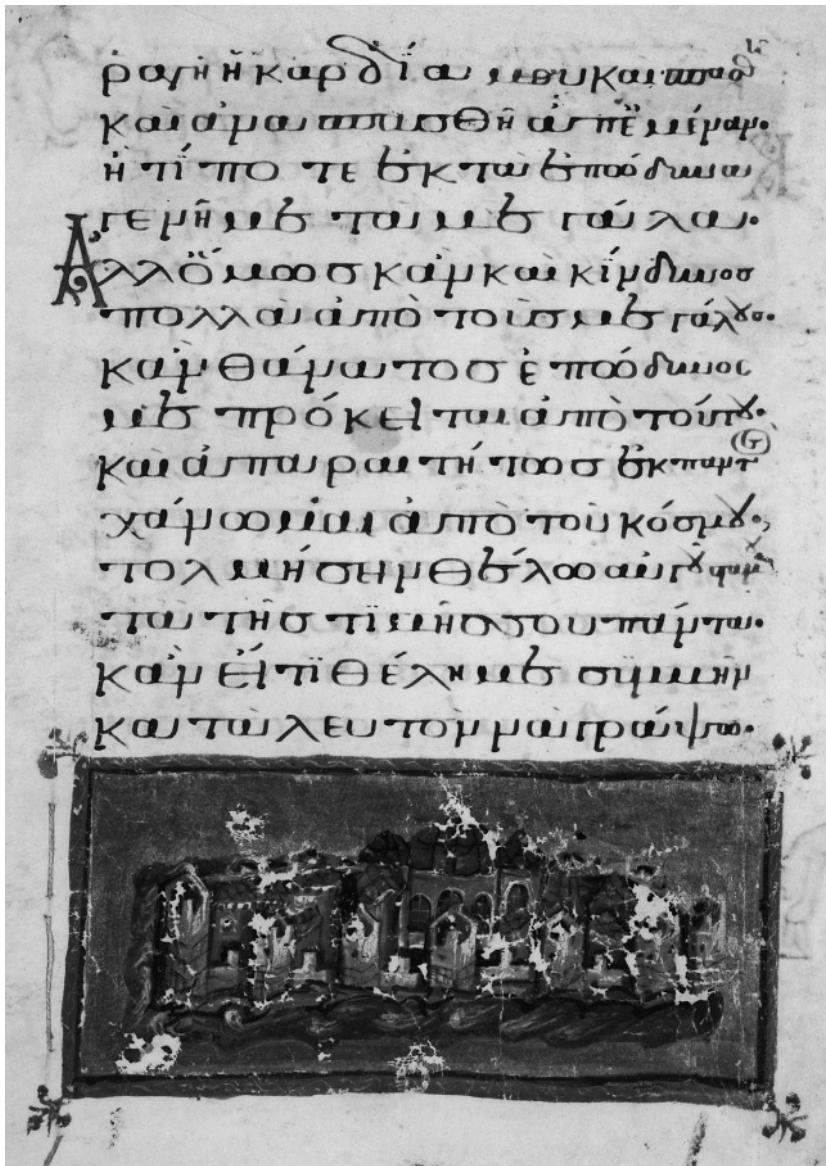


Figure 3.10 View of Constantinople, Vatican Library, Vat. Gr. 1851, fol. 5v

outstretched fills the obverse of the gold coin (Figure 3.11).⁵² Both coins conform to traditional iconographic models with the Virgin positioned

⁵² Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage*, no. 776; Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God*, 365 (cat. no. 44). Penna, "The Mother of God on Coins," 210, reads the emergence of the Virgin on Leo VI's coinage as a means of consolidating power and legitimacy.



Figure 3.11 *Nomisma* of Leo VI, Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, bequest of Thomas Whittemore, 1951. 31.4.1256, Dumbarton Oaks, Whittemore Loan WH 347.D2012

frontally wearing a tunic and maphorion, although the Virgin on Michael VIII's coin has a halo. The particular numismatic configuration of the orant Virgin with hands outstretched is generally known as the Blachernitissa because of its association with icons of the Blacherna monastery.⁵³ While the Virgin Blachernitissa, Nikopoios, and Hodegetria are all common types on coinage,⁵⁴ beginning in the tenth century, the Virgin is most commonly represented crowning the emperor or enthroned.⁵⁵ The particular

⁵³ On coins and seals, see W. Seibt in Nicolas Oikonomides (ed.), *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* (Washington DC, 1987), 50–4; *DOC V/1*, 75–7; and Penna, “The Mother of God on Coins,” 209–17. See Nancy Ševčenko, “Virgin Blachernitissa,” *ODB*; Annemarie Weyl Carr, “Court Culture and Cult Icons in Middle Byzantine Constantinople” in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture*, 90–3; and Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 145–63. For more on the Blachernitissa, see below, 257. This identification is not based on inscription, however, “as individual religious types had sometimes been in the past,” as Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 76, points out.

⁵⁴ These “types” are named after the sanctuaries of city’s icons of the Virgin as well as epithets and qualities of the Virgin. The complexity of the Virgin’s “typology” is succinctly outlined in Gerhard Podskalsky, Annemarie Weyl Carr, and Nancy P. Ševčenko, “Virgin Mary, Types of,” *ODB*. See also Carr, “Court Culture and Cult Icons,” 81–99; and Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 3, 75–80. For a succinct overview of this, including the relation of the orant Virgin to the city, see Robert Ousterhout, “The Virgin of the Chora: An Image and its Contexts” in Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (eds.), *Sacred Image, East and West* (Urbana, 1995), 91–109, especially 94–6.

⁵⁵ Thus, while the particular image of the Virgin on Michael’s coin departs from her representation on the coinage of his immediate predecessors, where the holy figure crowns the

combination of the Virgin orans and the city walls does not feature on any other coin than the gold *hyperpyron*. Unlike the reverse imagery of Michael's gold coinage, which appears on all denominations, this particular combination of the Virgin with the walls of Constantinople was reserved for the most valuable coinage, the gold, and it continued to be the standard obverse image for Palaiologan *hyperpyra* until gold ceased to be struck.

The closest visual parallel for the Virgin with the walls is found in the frescoes of the church of St Euphemia at the Hippodrome, an early Byzantine structure renovated with an elaborate fourteen-scene fresco cycle stylistically dated to the early Palaiologan period (Figure 3.12).⁵⁶ The hagiographic narrative culminates in an image of the orant saint standing frontally, surrounded by the beasts of the arena. While the fresco scene represents neither the Virgin nor the city walls, the close association of the emerging orant figure and the circular urban infrastructure bears strong formal affinities with Michael's gold coinage and, as many scholars have noted, the fresco design may have been based on the celebrated coin.⁵⁷ Beyond formal connections, however, the coinage shares with the Euphemia fresco a particular configuration of sacred figure and site. In other words, the relation between the two scenes involves more than a common use of a circular architectural device surrounding an orant holy figure, but also a more topographically specific representational logic.

St Euphemia's sacred remains were transferred from Chalcedon, where she had been thrown to wild beasts in the arena in the early fourth century,

emperor or appears enthroned, the composition is well situated within larger iconographic traditions. For an overview of the iconography of the Virgin on Palaiologan coinage, see *DOC V/1*, 75–7, and for earlier periods, see *DOC III*, 169–74. On pre-Komnenian coins, there are six variations of Marian types, mostly involving bust-length or standing images of the Virgin, whereas post-1081 she begins to be represented seated and with other variations. Many of Michael VIII's silver and copper trachea types feature on the obverse of the Theotokos both enthroned (silver: *DOC V/2*, nos. 4, 7, 11, and copper: 4, 6, 7, 16, 22, 25) and also orant in bust or half-length format (Constantinople silver trachea type 13 and copper trachea types 18, 19, 35). But even when her representation seems identical to the *hyperpyra* reverse image, as on a copper trachy in Dumbarton Oaks (*DOC V/2*, no. 92), she does not appear within the walls of the city.

⁵⁶ Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 131; and *DOC V/1*, 76. The Euphemia cycle has received little scholarship since the publication by Rudolph Naumann and Hans Belting, *Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom zu Istanbul und ihre Fresken* (Berlin, 1966). This is, no doubt, due in large part to the fact that it is not available for scholarly study. See Cyril A. Mango, "Euphemia, Church of Saint" in the *ODB*; Thomas F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, 1971), 61–7; André Grabar, "Études critiques," *CA*, 17 (1967), 251–4; and Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 258–60.

⁵⁷ The fresco preserves the figure of an unidentified bishop kneeling and possibly holding in his hands a miniature architectural model, though details are difficult to make out.



Figure 3.12 The Martyrdom of Saint Euphemia (scene 12), from the Church of Saint Euphemia, Constantinople

across the Bosphoros to Constantinople, where they were installed in part of the ancient palace of Antiochos, which was converted into a church in the sixth century and, significantly, was situated directly next to the Hippodrome. To be clear, her relics were eventually moved from the site of one arena to another. The early Palaiologan fresco cycle at her new church narrated the life of the saint from birth, through her protracted torture and ultimate martyrdom, concluding with an image of the orant saint in the center of the arena of Chalcedon. The architectural setting, demarcated as a perfect circle with a double-tiered colonnade rising from the upper half of the sphere behind the standing orant figure, references the curved southwestern end of the Hippodrome (the sphendone) directly adjacent to the church. The orant figure is thus framed by the architecture with which she has particular association; it mimetically suggests the locus of her martyrdom and also the area in which her sacred remains were located. The formal resonances between the coin's orant figure set within a perfect circle of ramparts and Euphemia's fresco image are unmistakable. More

than a mere formal parallel, however, a sense of topographic specificity links the two. For Euphemia, it is the Hippodrome; for the Virgin, it is Constantinople's walls and, by extension, the city's entirety.

The Virgin's role as patron and protector of the imperial city – especially the role of the Virgin's image – is well known,⁵⁸ with the Akathistos Hymn perhaps best elucidating the special relationship of the city and the Virgin. The popularity of this hymn in later Byzantium is unequivocal: regardless of the contested date of the Akathistos Hymn's original composition, the earliest illuminated versions of the hymn as well as the corpus of monumental fresco programs of the Akathistos, such as the frescoes in Cozia, Valachia (Figure 0.6), were produced in the Palaiologan period.⁵⁹

The penultimate strophe of the Akathistos Hymn acclaims the Virgin as the city's sacred and imperial fortification: “Hail, immovable tower of the Church” (χαῖρε, τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὁ ἀσάλευτος πύργος); “Hail, impregnable wall of the kingdom” (χαῖρε, τῆς βασιλείας τὸ ἀπόρθητον τεῖχος); “Hail, through whom trophies are raised up” (χαῖρε, δι’ ἧς ἐγείρονται τρόπαια); “Hail through whom enemies fall” (χαῖρε, δι’ ἧς ἐχθροὶ καταπίπτουσι).⁶⁰ Such strong and evocative imagery presents the Virgin as the city's essential sacred and imperial ramparts possessing the power for victory and defeat. Furthermore, the hymn's second prooemion addresses the Virgin in the very voice of the city:

To you, our leader in battle and defender,
O Theotokos, I, your city, delivered from sufferings,

⁵⁸ The literature on this subject is vast. As a point of departure, see N. H. Baynes, “The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople,” *Analecta Bollandiana*, 67 (1949), 165–77 [repr. *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (1974)]; A. Cameron, “The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople: A City Finds its Symbol,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 29(1) (1978), 79–108; Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 137–41; Ousterhout, “Virgin of the Chora,” 94–6; Carr, “Court Culture and Cult Icons”; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*; and the various essays collected by Vassilaki in *Mother of God and Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2005).

⁵⁹ For a recent survey of the visual programs of the Akathistos, see Spatharakis, *The Pictorial Cycles of the Akathistos Hymn*. See also Tania Velmans, “Une Illustration inédite de l’Acatiste et l’iconographie des hymnes liturgiques à Byzance,” *CA*, 22 (1972), 159–62; Babić, “L’iconographie constantinopolitaine”; André Grabar, “Une source d’inspiration de l’iconographie byzantine tardive: Les cérémonies du culte de la Vierge,” *CA*, 25 (1976), 143–62; and Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, “L’illustration de la première partie de l’Hymne Akathiste et sa relation avec les mosaïques de l’Enfance de la Kariye Djami,” *Byzantion*, 54 (1984), 648–702.

⁶⁰ Leena Mari Peltomaa (trans.), *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden, 2001), 18–19. See Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 12–16, on the civic-imperial imagery of the Akathistos; and Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 117–18 on the Virgin as the city's ramparts, as θύρα σωτήριος or πύλη τοῦ λογοῦ.

ascribe hymns of victory and thanksgiving.
 Since you are invincible in power,
 free me from all kinds of dangers,
 that I may cry to you:
 “Hail, bride unwedded.”⁶¹

The city offers thanks to the Virgin for her deliverance and defense. According to tradition, the hymn was sung by the standing (“akathistos”) clergy and laity in the Blacherna church in thanksgiving to the Theotokos for her protection of the city and triumph against enemies.⁶² This ritual context for the hymn is significant. Through recitation and repetition, the hymn reiterates its message of thanksgiving and reaffirms the bond between the city and the Virgin.

In addition to the Akathistos Hymn, the Virgin featured prominently in Constantinople’s ritual and civic life. Historically, relics and icons of the Theotokos, for example, held a central role in warding off attacks, leading victories, and structuring liturgical and imperial processions.⁶³ The most proximate ritual association of the Virgin with the city walls was Michael VIII’s triumphant 1261 *adventus*, which, again, stressed the centrality of the Virgin emphatically. Her image was processed through the walls of Constantinople as a ritual enactment of the return of the Virgin’s favor to the city, as a restoration of divine order. Akropolites describes how the Virgin’s icon was first installed on one of the towers of the Golden Gate before Michael inaugurated his performance of ritual prostration. Such an installation conveys in ritual terms the Akathistos Hymn’s understanding of the Virgin as the immovable tower and impregnable wall. In other historical moments, the icon of the Virgin was displayed on the city walls to ward off sieges. Most recently in the late twelfth century and in the more distant past during the Avar siege, it was thought that her icon was processed on

⁶¹ Trans. Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin Mary*, 3–4.

⁶² This is according to the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople, cited in Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 21 n. 1: “The devout people of Constantinople, showing their thanks to the Mother of God, stood the night through and sang this hymn to her who by vigilance and supernatural power had brought about a triumph over their enemies. . . . It was named the Akathistos because the clergy and whole people of the city performed it in this way then.”

⁶³ See Bissera Pentcheva, “The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople: The Virgin and Her Icons in the Tradition of the Avar Siege,” *BMGS*, 26 (2002), 2–41, revised as Chapter 2 of *Icons and Power*; and Christine Angelidi and Titos Papamastorakis, “Picturing the Spiritual Protector: From Blachernitissa to Hodegetria” in Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God*, 209–17, especially 216.

the city's walls.⁶⁴ The association of the Virgin's icon and Constantinople's walls, therefore, was part of both legend and more recent memory.

In terms of the relationship of the Virgin to the walls on the early Palaiologan coin, Anthony Cutler has objected to the locative descriptors of "among" or "within" or "rising over," claiming instead that "her station defies precise prepositional qualification."⁶⁵ The Virgin of the Walls, however, most effectively encapsulates the special relationship between the Virgin and the city's walls. The Virgin is depicted surrounded by the walls of the city that she protects and to which she, in some sense, belongs.⁶⁶ Adopting the preposition "of" suggests simultaneously that the Virgin belongs to the city and the city in turn belongs to her, thus emphasizing not merely the locative aspect but also the special and inalienable relationship of the city to the Virgin. The restored empire's gold currency was imprinted with the Virgin of the Walls in celebration of this close relationship as an image of thanksgiving akin to the Akathistos's hymn of thanksgiving. At the same time, the coin commemorated the defining moment of the Palaiologan emperor's rule: the restoration of the Queen of Cities.

Like Michael's bronze commemorative monument, the obverse design of his gold coin recalls the mosaic of imperial donation in the southwest vestibule of Hagia Sophia (Figure 2.16), where the city and its most celebrated Great Church are separated, each placed in the hands of its imperial founders. The mosaic model of Constantinople, as well as the depiction on folio 2 of the Vatican Greek manuscript 1851 (Figure 3.9), is oriented to emphasize the great ceremonial entrance to the city. As opposed to the almost grisaille tones of the masonry of the walls on the manuscript, the mosaic presents the Golden Gate in glimmering gold tesserae marked by two great crosses, one on each portal. The upper half of the interior of the city walls are rendered with dark tesserae in an attempt to indicate shadow, but the effect suggests emptiness, because the city's main church of Hagia

⁶⁴ Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 385. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, has argued that middle Byzantine authors rewrote the history of the Avar siege to include the icon of the Virgin.

⁶⁵ Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 114: "The Theotokos is evidently neither circumscribed nor confined by the *enceinte*. Only in the most profane sense could she be said to be 'within' or 'among' these bulwarks. Rising above them from the interior of the city, her station defies precise prepositional qualification. For this and other reasons yet to be considered we describe her as the Virgin on the Walls." Cutler's final chapter of *Transfigurations* is dedicated to this imagery and is entitled "The Virgin on the Walls." In the *BFP* catalogue, the imagery is consistently described as the Virgin Orans rising over the walls.

⁶⁶ Cyril A. Mango has eloquently described Constantinople as the "terrestrial fief" of the Virgin. See Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokopoupolis" in Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God*, 17.

Sophia in which the mosaic still can be seen today has been extracted and is offered without its protective fortifications by its sixth-century patron on the left side of the mosaic. The logic of the mosaic's dissociation of architecture and fortification hinges upon the association between gifts and their givers: Justinian and his church, Constantine and his city. The city and its principal church are separated pictorially in order to preserve their association with their givers and, further, they are united with respect to their recipient: they are both offered and commended to the protection of the Virgin and Child. Like his bronze monument, Michael's gold coinage draws on this celebrated mosaic imagery of imperial offering at the heart of the Great Church. While the bronze monument portrayed the emperor offering the city from his hands to the archangel just as Constantine offered the city to the Virgin, the coinage positions the city not in imperial hands but encircling its sacred protector. With the understanding that the walls on the coin stand in as a synecdoche for the urban entirety, the city's physical fortifications are conflated with its spiritual fortifications. In this sense, it seems that Pachymeres was not mistaken in his assertion that the city (*polis*) was imprinted on Michael's debased gold coin. The Virgin of the Walls was the essence and commemoration of the restored imperial city.

Divinely destined Palaiologan rule

The manner in which Constantinople is depicted on Michael's gold *hyperpyron* is unlike any other representation of a city on coinage or in other media. The particularity of the design lies not only in the relation of the walls to the holy figure but also in the relation of the walls to the emperor – in other words, in the relation of the obverse imagery to that of the reverse. On initial inspection, each face of Michael's gold *hyperpyron* appears to be separate and discrete. The identifying inscriptions on each side, for example, are complete and independent of the other side.⁶⁷ The modes of representation also appear entirely distinct, with an iconic image of the Virgin of the Walls on one side and a scene of unfolding imperial supplication and presentation on the other. Still, the two faces of Michael's gold coin do relate to each other; indeed, they complete one another. Taken together, they convey a specific iteration of legitimacy through piety that is the core of Michael's imperial image.

⁶⁷ Often a coin's inscription begins on one side, the principal side with the holy figure, and concludes on the reverse side, which bears the imperial imagery. This is one of the primary means of determining the priority of obverse and reverse. See Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 27.

Michael's gold coinage and the related bronze monument erected in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles prominently feature both the emperor on knee and the city of Constantinople, but a key distinction between the two hinges on the relation of the imperial body and city. In monumental bronze the city is positioned in the hands of the emperor as it is commended to the archangel directly from him. On the coin, however, the emperor and the city walls are physically disaggregated and relegated to separate faces. A sense of distance is heightened by the different pictorial modes and the format of coinage itself – one cannot take in the imagery of both faces simultaneously. This distancing constitutes the key to understanding the imagery, and it stands in sharp contrast to other numismatic conventions for depicting cities and their rulers.

Throughout the thirteenth century, coinage from Thessalonike, the empire's second city and second mint, combined depiction of its ruler, saint, and city. Cécile Morrisson has argued that their appearance together on the same face of the coin conveys a distinctive sense of "polis identity" on Thessalonian coinage. Her study of this material draws its title, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," from the iconography of the reverse of a billon trachy of Manuel Komnenos Doukas, who ruled Thessalonike from 1230 to 1237.⁶⁸ On this coin, the despot and the city's patron saint Demetrios are shown enthroned jointly supporting a model of the city of Thessalonike, which is identified by inscription and depicted as a fortified town with three great towers. A related iconography appears on the reverse of the "coronation issue" of the despot's older brother and predecessor, Theodore Komnenos Doukas (r. Thessalonike 1225–30). Here the ruler and saint are represented standing and Demetrios presents the city model to Theodore (Figure 3.13).⁶⁹ The coinage of the two successive rulers of Thessalonike portrays their authority in close and direct relationship to their city. Theodore receives the city from the saint, and Manuel jointly holds the city

⁶⁸ Cécile Morrisson, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," 179 and fig. 14. The obverse of this coin depicts St Michael standing in military dress holding a sword. Morrisson's penetrating study of the construction of Thessalonian identity conveyed through coinage lays the groundwork for my thinking about the newly restored Byzantine capital. Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 112–13, invokes these Thessalonian precedents in order to argue that the design of Michael's coinage was not "created ex nihilo." Morrisson, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," 183, points out that the iconography was already well established under the Doukas rulers in Thessalonike and was "simply taken over" in Nicaea by John III Vatatzes and then inspired the Palaiologoi. In the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Thessalonian models had an impact on the coinage of Constantinople too (189). On Manuel Komnenos Doukas and his coinage, see *DOC IV/2*, 566–77.

⁶⁹ Morrisson, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," 180 and figs. 6 and 7; and *DOC IV/2*, plate XXXVIII, no. 2. On Theodore Komnenos Doukas and his coinage, see *DOC IV/2*, 543–65.



Figure 3.13 Electrum trachy (trikephalon),
“coronation issue,” of Theodore Komnenos
Doukas, Thessalonike, Virgin orans/St
Demetrios presenting city model to the
emperor, Dumbarton Oaks
BZC.1960.88.4205.D2012

along with the saint. Moreover, holding and being presented with a model of the city were by no means the only ways of representing Thessalonike on its coinage.⁷⁰ On a billon trachy of John Komnenos Doukas, a bust-length image of the emperor rises above a schematic indication of the city’s walls,⁷¹ while on another he appears under an archway of the city.⁷² On coins such as these, the close and contiguous association of the ruler and city becomes a means of visually proclaiming rule, and it remains a consistent feature in Thessalonian coinage from this point onwards.⁷³

These traditions were established by the time that Michael consolidated power in Nicaea, reconquered Constantinople, and struck gold coinage in the restored imperial capital. Indeed, given the varied numismatic precedents in Thessalonike for linking imperial power to the city, one would expect that the 1261 Byzantine restoration of Constantinople might inspire a similar image on the coinage of the capital city. And in fact one of Michael’s copper trachea struck in Constantinople does depict the emperor on the

⁷⁰ On the lead seal of John Komnenos Doukas (r. 1237–42), Demetrios rests a hand on the shoulder of the emperor while the crenellated walls of the city are seen in the background on the right. Morrisson, “The Emperor, the Saint, and the City,” fig. 15.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, fig. 24. ⁷² *Ibid.*, fig. 25.

⁷³ As Morrisson (*ibid.*, 180) puts it: “The emperor holding or being handed the city remains a constant theme in all subsequent reigns down to the mid-fourteenth century and is typical of the local ideology of the *polis*.”

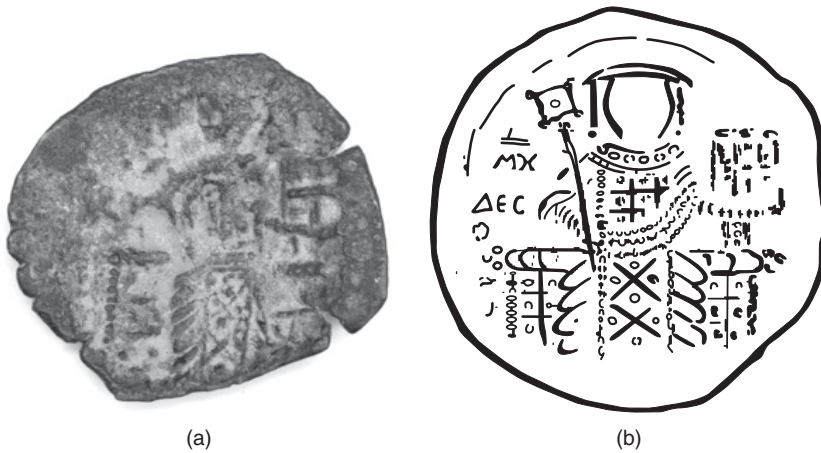


Figure 3.14 (a) Copper trachea of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class XIV: bust of Christ/emperor seated with labrum and city model (*DOC V/2*, no. 85), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1974.5.22.D2012. (b) Copper trachea of Michael VIII Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class XIV: redrawn after S. Bendall and P. Donald, *The Billon Trachea of Michael VIII Palaeologos, 1258–1282* (London, 1974), 12 (cat. no. C.14)

reverse seated and holding in one hand a labrum and a model of the city in the other (Figure 3.14).⁷⁴ But the main numismatic image of Constantinople is of an entirely different order. In no way can the walls of Michael's *hyperpyron* compare to a miniature model of the city along the lines of architectural models so common in the Byzantine donor image and typical of Thessalonian coinage. Not only does it depart radically in terms of the pictorial strategies – the city walls are laid out aerially and not frontally – but it also differs in its triangulation of the imperial and holy figures and the city ramparts. Unlike the coins struck in Thessalonike, where the emperor–saint–city triad features together on one side of the coin, they are divided between the two faces on Michael's Constantinopolitan *hyperpyra*.⁷⁵ By distancing the imperial body from the city's ramparts, which frame the

⁷⁴ *DOC V/2*, no. 85 (BZC.1974.5.22.D2012). Class XIV (*DOC V/2*, nos. 84–5) is the only type to depict Constantinople as a city model in the hands of the emperor, and it does not depict the emperor holding the city on knee or presenting it to another, as the emperor's monumental bronze statue does. The obverse depicts a bust of Christ. Detail is difficult to make out on these poorly struck specimens, but it is clear that they follow Thessalonian conventions in that the city model is pictured in the emperor's hands. Noticeably, unlike the Thessalonian models, the emperor does not receive or share the city with a saint on this coin.

⁷⁵ To be clear, as Morrisson, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," 181, notes, the emperor, saint, and city do not appear together on the same face of any coins struck in Magnesia or Constantinople.

Virgin instead, Michael's gold coin emphasizes the city (its walls) as the domain of the Virgin, not the emperor.

This distancing, paired with the imagery of imperial prostration on the reverse, lends a sense of piety and humility to the design of the coin as a whole. Morrisson has acknowledged that the message of commemoration on the gold coin's obverse is complicated by the reverse's mood of modesty and piousness that implies, on the contrary, imperial authority and legitimation:

avec une grande économie de moyens, la monnaie commémore la reconquête de la ville et fait de cette ville le symbole d'un empire restauré. Cependant, le nouvel empereur, par son attitude modeste et pieuse, rend grâce à l'action divine. Celle-ci à son tour lui confère une autorité et une légitimité implicites.⁷⁶

This astute reading merits elaboration because the complicated message of commemoration and legitimation is based on a dialogue between both faces of the coin. While separate messages are evoked on each side, when read together and seen in the succession demanded by the format of coinage, each side contributes to the inauguration of a third implicit message of divinely sanctioned legitimacy.

Read separately, the two faces of the coin celebrate the two main inaugural events of the later Byzantine period: the imperial restoration of Constantinople on the obverse and the coronation of the first Palaiologan emperor on the reverse. The obverse is a commemorative image entirely appropriate for gold coinage struck in the restored Byzantine Empire in its iconic pictorialization of the special relationship between the city and the Virgin, and in its celebration of the return of her favor to the newly renewed imperial city. The reverse depicts a pious scene of supplication in which Michael appears on knee with the support of his angelic advocate and is blessed by Christ in a gesture that implies the sanctioning of imperial authority, hence stressing his coronation. Read together, however, a third facet emerges: humility and, by extension, absolution and legitimacy.

By relegating the city's walls to the side of the Virgin and not the emperor, the coin ultimately suggests that the Byzantine restoration of the capital was divinely accomplished. This accords well with the emperor's own explanation of the conquest of Constantinople in *typika*, which, as noted in the previous chapter, was attributed to divine will, not the strength of his troops or his diplomatic acumen.⁷⁷ Moreover, by implication, the rise of Palaiologoi

⁷⁶ Morrisson, "L'hyperpère de Michel VIII," 84.

⁷⁷ Morrisson (*ibid.*, 84–6) concludes her reading of the coin on this note, with reference to the emperor's autobiography (the Mount Auxentios *typikon*).

is divinely sanctioned. Both are recurring themes in Michael's rhetoric. Again, recall that in contemporary sources the emperor's role is described in terms of instrumentality. His gold coinage underscores a similar message. Morrisson insightfully calls attention to the "more personal signification" of Michael's gold *hyperpyron*: by keeping the city on the other side of the coin from the emperor himself, the design suggests the divine origins of his deeds and the divine sanction of his rule. Michael is implicitly absolved of his heinous sins relating to his rise to sole rule.⁷⁸ In one sense, this creates a generally pious or humble image of imperium – much like his own verbal rhetoric where he credits the reconquest of Constantinople to divine will. On another level, however, the coin emphasizes legitimation and thus paves the divinely sanctioned way for the future rule of his line.

The imagery of the Virgin of the Walls and the imperial scene of supplication and presentation celebrate the restored Byzantine city and its centrality in the early Palaiologan conception of empire. In this sense, the coin projects a victorious image, and yet upon close scrutiny, the terms of the imagery reveal that the coin ultimately constitutes a statement of instrumentality, divine sanction, and, by implication, absolution and legitimacy. Given the circumstances of Michael's rise to the throne and his concerns for establishing dynastic strength, these are crucial messages. Although the first Palaiologan emperor's reign was marked by double excommunication, his image as the humble and divinely sanctioned ruler of the restored empire circulates on his gold coinage. While silver and copper coins exhibit a great deal of variety, this coin's iteration of imperial instrumentality remains the consistent gold image throughout his deeply fraught rule. The insistence of this golden image of divine legitimation underscores how Michael's coinage negotiated the weakness of his dynastic claims as part of his construction and consolidation of sovereignty.

Conclusion: sins of the Palaiologan father and the end of gold

The Virgin of the Walls on Michael VIII's *hyperpyron* set the standard for subsequent Palaiologan gold coinage, appearing on the coins of both Andronikos II and John V. Virtually as long as gold was struck in Constantinople, the Virgin of the Walls remained its defining feature.⁷⁹ Unlike

⁷⁸ In Morrisson's words, "the divine origin of Michael's power who is thus in a way absolved of his usurpation and subsequent murder of John IV Laskaris." Morrisson, "The Emperor, the Saint, and the City," 181.

⁷⁹ Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 112, asserts that "it is hardly an exaggeration to suggest that when and as long as gold was minted in the capital, the emblem remained canonical for Palaeologan

this enduring gold image of commemoration, scholarly assessment of Michael's reign has tended to emphasize his short-sightedness. The costs of his crowning achievements, the reclamation of Constantinople celebrated on his gold coinage, carried detrimental long-term consequences. Early on, this is evidenced by the liberal terms of the Treaty of Nymphaion. For the restoration of the imperial city, he ceded key maritime advantages and opened up the monetary market. Upon assuming the throne, in contrast to his Nicene predecessors, Michael implemented a heavy taxation program, which was described by many detractors as rapacious.⁸⁰ Moreover, in order to avert another siege (the Sicilian Vespers), he sought papal support, and to appease the papacy, he agreed to a Union of Churches in 1274. This was much more than a personal conversion, for the Council of Lyons subjugated the entire Byzantine populace to the Latin Church.⁸¹ This only exacerbated the heinousness of his usurpation. His breaking of oaths, his violence against the young Laskarid, and his ultimate removal of the Patriarch Arsenios prompted the Arsenite Schism, which endured for nearly half a century. Opponents of Michael's administration were treated harshly; the period after the blinding and exile of John IV has been described as a reign of terror rife with intimidation tactics and violence.⁸² Holobolos's treatment is but one example: his nose and lips were cut and he was paraded through the streets of Constantinople smeared in dung and beaten along with other Laskarid supporters.⁸³ Issues of legitimacy remained contentious throughout the thirteenth century, with the Laskarid cause often erupting in violence.⁸⁴

These divisive issues were left for Michael VIII's son and successor, and consideration of the coinage of Andronikos II reveals a negotiation of this distinctly unpopular imperial legacy. Having inherited a restored but

die-cutters." As Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 48, puts it: "it evidently gave such satisfaction that it was retained till the hyperpyron coinage came to an end." The obverse image also appears on a coin once attributed to Manuel II, but Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 214–15, firmly asserts that it is a fake.

⁸⁰ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 274–80.

⁸¹ It should be noted that the prepared throne, or *hetoimasia*, appears as a single issue of silver and copper trachea of Michael VIII, an iconography that has been associated with the Council of Lyons. See *DOC V/1*, 89 and 113.

⁸² Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," describes it as such. See also Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 95.

⁸³ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), I, 258–9.

⁸⁴ Two rebellions against the Palaiologan usurpation in the name of the wronged Laskarid were quelled. As Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," 203, states, "from generation to generation, the name of Laskaris remained on the lips of those who sought to take a stand against the Palaiologoi."

impoverished empire from his father, his first act was to repudiate Michael's unionist agenda and to return the *oikoumene* to Orthodoxy. For this, Andronikos was hailed in oratory as a New Constantine and New Zorobabel. These were the same epithets invoked for his father, but for Andronikos they signified his dissolution of the Church union policy of his father. While his father freed Constantinople from Latin rule and restored it as the Byzantine imperial capital, Andronikos liberated the city from the Latin Church and restored it as the Orthodox Christian capital.

Even after restoring Orthodoxy, however, the Arsenite Schism threatened the unity of the Church and Andronikos II's rule. He made concerted efforts to make amends and heal the rifts caused by his father's policies, and also to distance himself from his father.⁸⁵ To this end, Andronikos sought out John Laskaris in 1289–90, then an exiled and blind prisoner in Asia Minor, and asked for his forgiveness and blessing. Furthermore, in 1304 he delivered a public speech of apology for his father's sin and transgression.⁸⁶

Andronikos II also negotiated his father's problematic legacy by appropriating key symbols of the opposition or resistance to the Palaiologan administration. In what has been called a "shrewd and effective way of neutralizing the power of a dreaded rival," Andronikos promoted the cult of John Laskaris, who was posthumously venerated as a saint in Constantinople.⁸⁷ His remains were deposited in the very monastery of Saint Demetrios of the Palaiologos that had been founded by George Palaiologos in the twelfth century and later received the substantial patronage of Michael VIII.⁸⁸ Moreover, in 1284 the remains of Aresnios Autorianos were transferred from the island of Prokonnesos, where he had died in 1273, to Constantinople and were venerated in the Great Church.⁸⁹ Teresa Shawcross has read the promotion of both these anti-establishment cults not as acts of capitulation but

⁸⁵ In the words of Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 369, "the disagreement of the Arsenites with the church and its official representative took on distinct political overtones, as they put in question the legitimacy of the Palaiologan dynasty born in sin and excommunication."

⁸⁶ For Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," 215–16, this insistence suggests that the Laskarid cause "still continued to have some resonance." See also Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 369.

⁸⁷ Shawcross, "In the Name of the True Emperor," 224.

⁸⁸ For Shawcross (*ibid.*, 221), the housing of the Laskarid remains explains Theodora Palaiologina's patronage of the Lips monastery as a Palaiologan family mausoleum. See also Ruth Macrides, "Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period" in Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (Crestwood, 1981), 67–87 (71–3 for John IV and 73–9 for Arsenios); and Alice-Mary Talbot, "Cult and Pilgrimage: The Translation of Relics in the Palaiologan Period" in *Pilgrimage of Life: Studies in Honour of Professor René Gothóni* (Helsinki, 2010), 271–82.

⁸⁹ Then his body was later moved to the convent of St Andrew in Krisei by Theodora Raoulaina, a staunch Arsenite supporter. This episode is discussed in depth by Alice-Mary Talbot in "The Relics of New Saints: Deposition, Translation and Veneration in Middle and Late Byzantium,"

of clever ideological appropriation. This is suggested by the most unusual manner in which the end of the Arsenite Schism was celebrated in 1310. The uncorrupted body of Arsenios was dressed in sacerdotal vestments, brought to the sanctuary of the Great Church, and installed on a throne. Placed in his hand was the decree of absolution from excommunication, which was then read aloud by the current patriarch.⁹⁰ In this elaborately staged performance of absolution, Andronikos thus co-opted the sacred body of his enemy who had excommunicated his father.

In light of such a creative ritual manipulation of his father's deeply problematic legacy, Andronikos II's numismatic image, as we might expect, emphasizes his imperial lineage and also exhibits a great degree of piety. The design of his first gold coinage continues his father's precedent by picturing the Virgin of the Walls on its obverse and an image of the emperor kneeling before Christ on its reverse (Figures 3.15 and 3.16).⁹¹ The obverse image is virtually unchanged from that of Michael VIII's coin, but the imperial configuration of the reverse exhibits subtle though significant differences. Here Christ stands erect and reaches down with one hand to

paper presented at the 2011 Dumbarton Oaks Spring Symposium. I thank the author for sharing with me a draft of her paper in advance of its publication. The translation of Arsenios's body to Hagia Sophia is discussed by Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.), III, 95–9.

⁹⁰ This “bizarre” ceremony was the culmination of Andronikos II's historical revisionism. See Shawcross, “In the Name of the True Emperor,” 233–4. While alive, Arsenios had reiterated his excommunication of Michael VIII in his testament of 1273 (and extended his anathema to anyone who would challenge its authenticity). But Andronikos dismissed the document as a forgery and even spread the word that Arsenios supported Andronikos's rule. On the end of the Arsenite Schism, see V. Laurent, “Les grandes crises religieuses à Byzance: la fin du schisme Arsénite,” *Bulletin de la Section historique, Académie roumaine*, 26 (1945), 225–313; Joan M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1986), 235–54; and Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 105ff.

⁹¹ *DOC V/2*, 228 (Whittemore Loan 1951.31.4.1913) and 234 (BZC.1960.88.4451.D2012). On Andronikos's gold coinage, see *DOC V/1*, 126–37 (with Table 11). The Virgin of the Walls forms the obverse of all his gold *hyperpyra*. For Class I coinage, the obverse bears the Virgin of the Walls with six towers and the reverse depicts Christ standing holding a book and touching the emperor crouching in *proskynesis*. There are two variations: in one Andronikos is nimbate (*DOC V/2*, nos. 220–8) and in the other he lacks a nimbus (*DOC V/2*, nos. 229–34). His second type of gold coinage depicts on its reverse Andronikos II and Michael IX kneeling on either side of Christ, and on the obverse the Virgin of the Walls with six towers (*DOC V/2*, nos. 235–61) and with four towers (*DOC V/2*, nos. 262–492). The reduction of towers, according to Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 128, allows more space for privy marks. On a third type of *hyperpyron*, Christ blesses Andronikos II and Andronikos III (*DOC V/2*, nos. 493–503). These joint issues will be discussed in greater depth below. The subtle shifts in the main types – from *proskynesis* with nimbus to no nimbus and from city walls with six to four towers – reflects a simplification of design, a paring down of detail. Note that the Virgin of the Walls, though essentially the same as on Michael VIII's coin (depending on the number of towers), is rendered much less carefully.



Figure 3.15a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of Andronikos II Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class I: Virgin and the walls/Christ blessing the crouching emperor (*DOC V/2*, no. 228), Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, bequest of Thomas Whittemore, 1951. 31.4.1913, Dumbarton Oaks, Whittemore Loan WH 764.D2012



Figure 3.16a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of Andronikos II Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class I: Virgin and the walls/Christ blessing the crouching emperor (*DOC V/2*, no. 234), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1960.88.4451.D2012

touch the crown of Andronikos in the lower-left corner. In the place of the saint on his father's coin⁹² is a lengthy inscription that lists considerably more

⁹² Andronikos does appear with his own saintly namesake; see *DOC V/1*, 77 and *DOC V/2*, nos. 686–8.

elaborate nomenclature. In fact, according to Grierson, these early coins of Andronikos present “the fullest imperial title that ever occurs on a Byzantine coin.”⁹³ Michael VIII’s coinage generally included the abbreviation for his first name (MX or XM), the title *despotes*, and, when room was available, an abbreviated form of Palaiologos.⁹⁴ The more lengthy inscriptions of the early coinage of Andronikos resemble the emperor’s full traditional titulature of imperial documents.⁹⁵ The first coins of Andronikos thus visually echo his father’s coinage designs, but elaborate his official nomenclature and in so doing elaborate the legitimacy of his rule.

The most dramatic departure of Andronikos II’s coinage from that of his father, however, is the emperor’s posture, which constitutes a much deeper form of *proskynesis* than the mere kneeling position of Michael VIII on his coin. Andronikos’s nearly horizontal torso forms a deep bow best described as crouching.⁹⁶ The configuration is much closer to the unnamed emperor in the narthex mosaic at Hagia Sophia (Figure 2.17) than the numismatic image of his father, who, despite his kneeling position, holds his torso and

⁹³ Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 7, 96, 131. The fullest inscription is on a specimen in the British Museum: ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΠΙCΤΟC ΒΑCΙΑΕΥC ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟC Ο ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟC. On some of Andronikos’s gold coinage, he too is merely designated *despotes*, but others bear a much more lengthy inscription.

⁹⁴ The numerous inscription variations have led Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 7, to speculate that the mint probably received no special instructions. On the title *despotes*, see R. Guilland, “Le Despote (δ δεσπότης),” *REB*, 17 (1959), 52–89 [repr. R. Guilland, *Recherches sur les institutions byzantines* II (Berlin, 1967), 1–24]; and Albert Failler, “Les insignes et la signature du despote,” *REB*, 40 (1982), 171–86.

⁹⁵ Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 95–6, points out that the lengthiest of Andronikos II’s inscriptions includes the standard phrase of official imperial documents ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ θεῷ πιστός βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων.

⁹⁶ As described by Grierson in *DOC V/1*, 68–9, where he distinguishes between the emperor kneeling and the emperor in *proskynesis*. Spatharakis, “Proskynesis,” 191, argues that Andronikos II’s coin “is the only Byzantine coin we have on which an emperor is shown in *proskynesis*.” While it is true that his posture is a deeper, more intense form of *proskynesis* than his father’s, as noted in the last chapter, the term *proskynesis* should be understood to encompass a wider range of gestures – from full prone abasement to a nod or bow. Cutler has treated this posture on this coinage in *Transfigurations*, 54–6. The kneeling position of Michael VIII’s coin was used on one issue of Andronikos II’s billon trachea (cf. Cutler, *Transfigurations*, 55 n. 16). Andronikos III is also represented kneeling before Christ in a similar manner to Michael VIII. Natalia Teteriatnikov, “The New Image of Byzantine Noblemen in Palaiologan Art,” *Quaderni Utinensi*, 15(16) (1996), 310, has read the transition from Michael VIII’s upright kneeling to Andronikos II’s deeper *proskynesis* teleologically and has traced its emulation by later Byzantine aristocrats such as Metochites at the Chora. See Ševčenko’s insightful treatment of this kneeling posture in relation to later Byzantine patronage in “The Portrait of Theodore Metochites.” As for the singularity of the coin of an emperor bent low, Jonathan Shea brought to my attention a coin attributed to John V published by Simon Bendall, “Longuet’s Salonica Hoard Reexamined,” *American Journal of Numismatics/Museum Notes*, 29 (1984), 143–58.

head upright and frontal (Figures 3.2–3.4a). Frontality, indicative of hieratic majesty, is entirely absent on Andronikos's coin. His body is positioned in complete profile with both hands directed toward Christ in supplication. Overall his coin accentuates *proskynesis* much more than presentation. Andronikos does not return the viewer's gaze directly; his attention remains locked in the scene of supplication.⁹⁷ The distinctiveness of the deep kneeling posture in fact became the coin's defining feature according to the thirteenth-century Italian merchant Pegolotti, who described it as "kneeler" type (*inginocchiati*).⁹⁸

Another distinctive feature of Andronikos II's main type of gold coinage is that he appears with a halo in one variation and without a halo in another. In the first, the nimbate head of the crouching emperor is turned up toward Christ beseeching (Figures 3.15). In the second, the emperor's face is seen in three-quarter angle, without a halo, looking off into the distance in a manner that most strongly recalls the unnamed emperor in *proskynesis* in the narthex of Hagia Sophia (Figures 3.16). No suitable explanation for the presence or absence of a halo has been proposed,⁹⁹ but the appearance of a halo in and of itself is significant, as it marks the beginning of a shift in numismatic conventions.

Although the emperor is often distinguished by a halo in Byzantine art, as in the imperial mosaics throughout Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (Figures 0.1–0.3 and 2.16–2.17), it was not customary for coinage to depict the emperor nimbate. Roman coinage did represent the emperor with a nimbus, and while this practice figured occasionally into the fifth and sixth centuries for special issues, it became obsolete by the beginning of the

⁹⁷ According to Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 69, his head is "awkwardly twisted so that he looks away from Christ and toward the spectator" (a similar statement can be found at 131). Grierson also points out that this "crouching in deep adoration" occurs not only on Andronikos's Type I *hyperpyra* but also on other coins of the same emperor and Andronikos III.

⁹⁸ On Pegolotti, see *DOC V/1*, 20–1. The Italian merchant's description problematizes our assumptions about the prioritization of the two faces of coinage. As mentioned above, Pachymeres singles out the city representation as the characteristic image of Michael VIII's coin without reference to the innovative imperial imagery on the reverse. On the other hand, Pegolotti refers to the gold coinage of Andronikos II as a "kneeler type" (*inginocchiati*) and also describes the image of Christ with two emperors as the "three saints" type, in so doing identifying both coins by the face bearing the imperial imagery. Ambiguity then exists as to the priority of the face – at least according to this contemporary account. See *DOC V/1*, 44–5 and 108; and Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 291.

⁹⁹ Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 67, suggests that the presence of the nimbus on Andronikos's coin was "no more than an aberration of a particular die-sinker," a position objected to by Morrisson and Bendall, "Monnaies de la fin de l'empire byzantin," 488. The halo's presence is also read as a chronological marker by Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 131, and the nimbate series was the first of Andronikos's reign.

seventh century.¹⁰⁰ Despite the originality of the design as a whole, Michael VIII's coinage maintains the traditions of his immediate predecessors by not depicting the emperor with a halo. Against this traditionalism, the appearance – and then disappearance – of an imperial halo on the second Palaiologan emperor gives us note for pause. Beginning with the coinage of Andronikos II, the nimbate emperor became more common on later Byzantine coinage.¹⁰¹ With the exception of the dynasty's founder, Palaiologan coinage revives the ancient numismatic tradition and conforms to the norm for imperial representation in other media.

But perhaps more suggestive than the revival of more ancient numismatic conventions is the very fact of its differentiation from the coinage designs of Andronikos II's father, who was decidedly not represented nimbate. For a ruler deeply invested in recuperating a problematic imperial legacy, as the son of an excommunicated usurper, the emergence of a halo, even if not consistently present for the duration of his long rule, is significant: at a time before the end of the Arsenite Schism, and before the sacred corpse of the former patriarch was displayed with his father's absolution text, the presence of the halo should be read as a means of distancing Andronikos from his heretical father. And the marker of this distancing of the new legitimate imperial son from his heretical father is the halo, the most legible visual marker of sanctity.

The combination of the deep genuflection of *proskynesis*, beseeching gesture, and halo suggests penitence for his father's sins. Spatharakis has argued that since Christ is shown touching Andronikos II's head while he is in *proskynesis*, the coin expresses "both an aspect of begging and grateful response."¹⁰² The sins of his father are clearly the source of his beseeching and the coin pictures the favorable outcome of the supplication exchange. It has been argued earlier in this chapter that the reverse image of Michael's gold coin also presented a full and successful cycle of supplication, with the emperor on knee receiving the blessing of Christ, but facing frontally as a scene of presentation in which the crowned emperor is displayed as a terrestrial counterpart to Christ. The detailed attention to Michael's crown emphasizes this. On Andronikos II's coinage, both the coins with and without halo, the emperor is also shown as successful in his supplication; the emphasis, however, is less on displaying the blessed emperor to the

¹⁰⁰ On this, see *DOCV*/1, 67.

¹⁰¹ It does not become a consistent part of Palaiologan coinage until the later fourteenth century. Grierson points out that a halo appears on "virtually the whole coinage of Manuel II, John VII, and John VIII, and Constantine XI."

¹⁰² Spatharakis, "Proskynesis," 203.

viewer and is more invested in showcasing the emperor's very penance and supplication. The difference between the two is not absolute, but one of degree and emphasis.

Andronikos II's second type of gold *hyperpyron* preserves his father's obverse design of the Virgin of the Walls, and on its reverse it introduces his successors, first his son Michael IX and then later his grandson Andronikos III. One of the distinctive features of Palaiologan coinage is the occurrence of joint rulers on coinage.¹⁰³ The precedent for such association coinage was set by Michael VIII, who issued a coin to celebrate the coronation of Andronikos II as co-emperor in November 1272.¹⁰⁴ Class VIII silver trachea depict the first and second Palaiologan emperors together side by side on knee below a bust-length image of St Michael, whose hands reach down to touch their crowns (Figure 3.6).¹⁰⁵ The two appear together on a number of copper coins as well.¹⁰⁶ Andronikos II's second class of gold *hyperpyra*, which were first struck in 1294,¹⁰⁷ follow the model of his father's silver and bronze coins for the basic configuration of the reverse. In these Andronikos and his son Michael IX appear symmetrically arranged on knee, and between them an elongated figure of Christ reaches down and touches each of their crowns. According to numismatic conventions for signifying precedence,

¹⁰³ Generally on coins where two rulers were associated, it was standard for the senior emperor to appear on the left and the junior on the right. Precedence could also be suggested by size and the presence or absence of a beard (the junior partner to appear smaller and beardless). See *DOC V*/1, 7–8, 72, 106 (with bibliography).

¹⁰⁴ There is some debate about when exactly Andronikos II was made co-emperor. Grierson, *DOC V*/1, 127, calls his long reign “a singularly unhappy one” and it certainly was in terms of dynastic succession. Andronikos ruled in his own right from the time of Michael's death in 1282 until 1328 (and he died in 1332). Andronikos's son Michael IX was crowned co-emperor in 1294, but then died in 1320, and his son, Andronikos III, was recognized as co-emperor in 1317. See below on the struggle over the succession. The principal study of Andronikos II's reign remains Angeliki Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1282–1328* (Cambridge, 1972). See also Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 91–147.

¹⁰⁵ Class VIII: *DOC V*/2, no. (36). Similar reverse imagery appears on Class XVI silver trachea with the two imperial figures being blessed by Christ rather than St Michael: *DOC V*/2, no. (44). Grierson describes the figures on no. (44) as kneeling, while for no. (36), he describes them as bust length.

¹⁰⁶ For the joint copper coins of Michael VIII and Andronikos II, see *DOC V*/2, 197–211.

¹⁰⁷ Shortly before Michael died in 1282, Andronikos's son Michael (IX) was associated with him as co-emperor as a means of mapping out the succession and precluding any claims to the throne by Michael VIII's other children and their heirs. In particular, this line of imperial descent precludes Andronikos's younger brother, Constantine, who was born in the restored Byzantine imperial capital, and was thus a true porphyrogennetos, from asserting his legitimacy. As Grierson, *DOC V*/1, 104, points out, the logic underlying the association of Andronikos II and Michael IX was to “exclude any claims that could be put forwards in favor of Constantine on the grounds that he was born after Michael VIII's accession and was therefore a porphyrogenitus.”



Figure 3.17a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of Andronikos II Palaiologos and Michael IX Palaiologos, Constantinople, Class II: Virgin and the walls/Christ with Andronikos II on l. and Michael IX on r. (DOC V/2, no. 236), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1960.88.5296.D2012

Andronikos appears on the left and is represented with a beard, while his beardless son is on the right (Figure 3.17).¹⁰⁸ This same visual formula was repeated when Michael IX died in 1320 and his son Andronikos III was crowned. The configuration of the coins of Andronikos II and Andronikos III is identical – with the name of Michael IX replaced by Andronikos III – but both senior and junior emperors appear bearded.¹⁰⁹

Grierson attributes the prevalence of association coinages in the later Byzantine period to dynastic insecurities.¹¹⁰ Such coins map out future intentions by publicly displaying the intended order of succession. With numismatic images of co-rule, Andronikos II included his heir on coinage

¹⁰⁸ DOC V/2, no. 236 (BZC.1960.88.5296.D2012). Sometimes the figures are interchanged and this has caused a great deal of speculation. On association coinages, see notes 103 above and 110 below.

¹⁰⁹ DOC V/2, nos. 493–503.

¹¹⁰ According to Grierson, DOC V/1, 8, there was no systematic practice of associating co-rulers on Palaiologan coins: “the Palaeologans, like the Comnenians before them, did not practice association on the coins in any systematic fashion, one emperor might do so, another not.” On Palaiologan association coinage, see Grierson DOC V/1, 129–30 (with bibliography); P. Protonotarios, “The Hyperpyra of Andronikos II and Michael IX (1295–1320) with Transposed Effigies and Names of the Emperors or with Transposed Legends Only,” *Νομισματικά Χρονικά*, 4 (1976), 42–6; Simon Bendall, “Hyperpyra of Andronikos II and Michael IX with Transposed Effigies,” *RN*, 150 (1995), 127–32. As noted above, Pegolotti, who described Andronikos II’s singly issued gold coin as a “kneeler” (*inginocchiati*), describes this second major gold type erroneously as “three saints” (*tre santi*) because of the three figures.

in order to preclude his brother's claims. We see in these coins an attempt to secure clearly delineated Palaiologan succession across two generations. Just as coinage designs look forward by projecting authority in advance and thus establishing an expected transmission of power, they also look backwards and create a sense of continuity, in that Andronikos II's association coinage maintains his father's iconography of the Virgin of the Walls on its obverse.

The half-century-long reign of Andronikos II ended with the eruption of civil war. In 1320 the elder emperor disinherited his grandson, who had appeared at his side on his gold coinage, and a revolt ensued.¹¹¹ Following the discovery of a plot to dethrone the elder emperor, Andronikos III was arrested, but escaped to Adrianople, where he was proclaimed emperor by his supporters. In 1321, when it became clear that his army was poised for an attack on Constantinople, Andronikos II agreed to partition the empire and grant Andronikos III sovereignty over the area around Adrianople. As a commentary on these events, Andronikos II issued a silver coin representing the emperor with the Prophet Ahijah, who in 3 Kings 11:29 presages the division of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel.¹¹² If Grierson is correct in this identification, the coin invokes Old Testament precedent in support of the present conflict. Like the Kingdom of Israel, the partition between the two imperial Andronikoi was a substantial step in the disintegration of the late Byzantine Empire. A year later, the partition experiment failed and Andronikos II was forced to concede to joint rule with his grandson over the whole empire, and by 1328 the elderly emperor was forced to abdicate entirely.

The conflict between Andronikos II and Andronikos III left the empire weakened and divided, and established the factions for the second Civil War (1341–7). The death of Andronikos III in 1341 triggered a struggle for the regency of the nine-year-old heir to his throne, John V Palaiologos. The contest was between the deceased emperor's trusted advisor, the *megas domestikos* John (VI) Kantakouzenos, and his widow, Anna of Savoy. Taking advantage of Kantakouzenos's absence from the capital on campaign at the time of Andronikos III's death, the coalition of Anna of Savoy, Patriarch XIV Kalekas, and Alexios Apokaukos declared their own regency and confiscated Kantakouzenos's property. In so doing they triggered a war that lasted until 1346, at which point Kantakouzenos and the young John V ruled together

¹¹¹ The revolt was precipitated by this event, but was caused by a deeper anti-aristocratic and class-based rationale. See Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 151–84.

¹¹² *DOC* VI/1, 77, 96, and 143–5. This fourth group of basilica is represented by only two specimens.



Figure 3.18a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of John V Palaiologos, Constantinople, Andronikos III kneeling before Christ/Anna and John (*DOC V/2*, no. 942), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1960.88.4636.D2012

as co-emperors.¹¹³ During the regency of Anna and John, a unique gold *hyperpyron* was issued that speaks to the codification of legitimacy and succession through coinage. The obverse image adopts the reverse design of Michael VIII's gold coin, with the emperor on knee before Christ, but in what appears to be a posthumous imperial numismatic effigy, the deceased Andronikos III is depicted on knee with Christ blessing him (Figure 3.18). Standing effigies of Anna and John V constitute the reverse design with the regent, noticeably taller in stature, occupying the place of honor.¹¹⁴ Rather than the Virgin of the Walls, this coin features the posthumous portrait of the deceased emperor, husband and father of the current rulers.¹¹⁵ The coin maps the fragile genealogy of the imperial throne in an attempt to strengthen the regency.

Shortly thereafter, the last true Byzantine gold coin was struck, during the joint rules of John V and John VI Kantakouzenos (Figure 3.19).¹¹⁶ The

¹¹³ The second half of this study will further discuss the dynastic issues involved here. For an overview of the events, see Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 185–295.

¹¹⁴ *DOC V/2*, no. 942 (BZC.1960.88.4636.D2012). Attributions for this coin are varied. See *DOC V/1*, 176–7. On coinage of John's minority, see *DOC V/1*, 175–81.

¹¹⁵ In addition to this coin, Anna of Savoy is associated with the so-called “politikon” coins. This series of silver coins features an image of a fortified city or castle on its reverse with a cross paired with the inscription ΤΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟΝ on its obverse. See Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 532–5; Hendy, *DOC IV/1*; and Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 83, 193–9.

¹¹⁶ *DOC V/2*, no. 1193 (BZC.1956.23.5040.D2012). The joint coinage of John V and John VI Kantakouzenos was issued sometime between 1347 and 1353; see *DOC V/1*, 182–6. As Grierson makes clear (*DOC V/1*, 47), there are no known gold *hyperpyra* specimens from



Figure 3.19a–b Gold *hyperpyron* of John V Palaiologos and John VI Kantakouzenos, Constantinople, Virgin and the walls/Christ blessing John V and John VI (*DOC V/2*, no. 1193), Dumbarton Oaks BZC.1956.23.5040.D2012

reverse of this final Byzantine *hyperpyron* features the two rulers on knee blessed by Christ in the manner of previous Palaiologan association coins, and the obverse returns to the iconic image of Virgin of the Walls, first struck in 1261 by Michael VIII. Although the walls of the imperial capital would stand unbreached until 1453, the Virgin of the Walls and gold coinage altogether ceased to be struck in the mid-fourteenth century. From then on, the gold *hyperpyron* constituted a money of account alone.

John VI's sole reign or in the later years of John V's rule. Technically, the final gold coin is the so-called gold "florin" of John V, on which see *DOC V/1*, 44, 47, 79–80, and 193. This final gold coin raises important questions about the relationship between Byzantine and Western European numismatic conventions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Byzantine coinage in this period, as numismatists have long recognized, is intimately tied to the development of Western European coinage. Scholars have pointed out the wide circulation in the thirteenth century of the silver Venetian ducat (*grosso*) with the doge kneeling before St Mark. The image of Michael VIII in the very public bronze monument and his widely disseminated coinage thus participates in pan-Mediterranean material and iconographic networks in addition to the particular Constantinopolitan agendas of legitimation argued here. In this period we see similar developments in coinage across the Mediterranean. In certain instances we see a wholesale adoption of western numismatic conventions, as in Andronikos II's silver *basilikon*, which is modeled on the Venetian coin, or John V's "florin," which borrows the figure of St John from the "fiorino d'oro" of Florence. In some instances the overlap is idiosyncratic, as, for example, in the enigmatic copper trachy of Andronikos II that depicts the emperor alongside the doge kneeling (*DOC V/1*, 69). It can be no coincidence that the numismatic kneeling ruler image, which is the hallmark of early Palaiologan coinage, is related to Venetian coinage.

PART II

“Atoms of Epicurus”: the imperial image as gift in an age of decline

Introduction to Part II

The civil wars of the mid-fourteenth century left the empire politically fragmented and financially depleted. In 1343, having already ensured that the young John V Palaiologos was properly crowned, Anna of Savoy pawned the imperial crown jewels to the Republic of Venice.¹ The precious insignia of imperium were dispatched to Venice as a surety for a loan of 30,000 ducats. The money was never repaid and the crown jewels never returned to Constantinople. Years later, a renegotiation of the terms of his mother's loan figured as part of another debt negotiation that ended in imperial humiliation. In 1370 John V found himself in Venice unable to pay his debts and without sufficient funds to cover his return to Constantinople. As a solution he proposed ceding to Venice the commercially advantageous island of Tenedos at the mouth of the Hellespont. In exchange, the Venetians would return the crown jewels in addition to six warships and 25,000 ducats. The emperor, however, was unable to deliver on this promise. His eldest son, Andronikos IV, who had been appointed regent in Constantinople, refused his father's command and would not relinquish the island. The emperor was thus left humiliated, with neither money nor credit, and was detained as a hostage in Venice until his second son, the future emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, came to his aid from Thessaloniki to pay his bail.²

¹ See Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden* V, 9–10, no. 2891; T. Bertelè, “I gioielli della corona bizantina dati in pegno alla repubblica veneta nel sec. XIV e Mastino II della Scala” in *Studi in onore di Amintore Fanfani* II (Milan, 1962), 91–177; Barker, *Manuel II*, 443–5; J. Chrysostomides, “John V Palaeologus in Venice (1370–1371) and the Chronicle of Caroldo: A Re-interpretation,” *OCP*, 31 (1965), 76–84; D. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge, 1988), 259–62, 270–1; Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 199, 271; and Paul Hetherington, “The Jewels from the Crown: Symbol and Substance in the Later Byzantine Imperial Regalia,” *BZ*, 96(1) (2003), 157–68.

² Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 237, 272–3, 278–81. John V had earlier negotiated with Venice over rights to Tenedos in the 1350s. This is not the last we will hear about Tenedos.

But why was the Emperor of Byzantium in Venice in the first place? No Byzantine emperor before him had set foot there or traveled in person to Western Europe at all. The notion of the emperor humbling himself before “barbarian” lords would have been incomprehensible at any other point in the empire’s history. One of the more striking contrasts between the earlier and later Byzantine eras involves the degree to which the emperor took an active and mobile role in diplomatic endeavors. Only in the fourteenth century did emperors begin to travel in person to the West as diplomatic supplicants seeking military assistance instead of sending and receiving delegations from Constantinople.

Earlier imperial protocol for receiving diplomatic delegates is instructive in this regard. As is well known, in the tenth century Constantine Porphyrogenitos employed automata to terrify or at the very least to awe foreign visitors to court, such as Liudprand of Cremona. In his attempt to create an air of detachment, even intimidation, the emperor did not acknowledge the envoy’s arrival or presence directly, and spoke to him only through a bureaucratic intermediary.³ In the fourteenth century, by contrast, Andronikos III Palaiologos received Ibn Battuta without an elevating dais or any other mechanical wonders. Moreover, the emperor inaugurated the exchange and spoke directly to the emissary, through an interpreter but notably without a court intermediary. Furthermore, the emperor tried to ease rather than create apprehension and even expressed pleasure at the interchange.⁴ A crucial distinction in hierarchy emerges from these different imperial receptions. While the loosening of the rigid protocol for imperial presentation in the Palaiologan period suggests diminished distance and majesty, it nonetheless constituted a reception: Battuta came to Andronikos.⁵ By

³ Upon rising from *proskynesis* immediately after witnessing the automated roaring lions and elevating throne, Liudprand describes his interaction with the emperor as follows: the emperor “did not speak at all for himself, since, even if he wished to, the great space between us would render it unseemly, so he asked about the life of Berengar and his safety through a minister. When I had answered him reasonably, and when his interpreter gave a sign, I left.” Liudprand of Cremona, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, translated by Paolo Squatriti (Washington DC, 2007), 198.

⁴ “He [the emperor] signed to me before I had saluted and reached him, to sit down for a moment, so that my apprehension might be calmed, and I did so. Then I approached him and saluted him, and he signed to me to sit down, but I did not do so. He questioned me about Jerusalem . . . I answered him on all his questions, the Jew interpreting between us. He was pleased with my replies.” H. A. R. Gibb (ed.), *The Travels of Ibn Battuta AD 1325–1354* (Cambridge, 1962), 505–6. See also M. Izeddin, “Ibn Battouta et la topographie byzantine” in *Actes du VIe Congrès International d’Études Byzantines II* (Paris, 1950), 191–6.

⁵ Linguistically the verb “to come,” *hikneomai*, forms the root of the word for supplication, *hiketeia*.

the later fourteenth century, as the humiliating experience of John V Palaiologos attests, this hierarchy, already loosened, was dramatically reversed, with the traditionally supplicated emperor becoming supplicant, leaving Constantinople to make personal appeals to foreign courts in person.

John V was the first emperor to break so fully with the traditional bounds of imperial protocol in this regard. His detainment in Venice was the culmination of a most tragic series of itineraries motivated by his quest for papal support against the Ottomans, who were raiding Thrace and even threatened Constantinople.⁶ He first traveled in 1366 to Byzantium's nearest Catholic neighbor, Hungary, where his diplomatic efforts amounted to nothing. At the conclusion of his stay, furthermore, his young son Manuel was detained as a hostage, and the emperor himself was held as a virtual prisoner on the frontier between Hungary and Bulgaria.⁷ Then in the spring of 1369, the emperor embarked upon an even more dramatic voyage to Rome where he professed a personal conversion to the Catholic faith. In a private ceremony in the presence of the pope and the Roman cardinals, the text of the emperor's profession was read aloud by Demetrios Kydones and by one of the pope's representatives. Both Greek and Latin versions were signed by John V and affixed with his golden imperial seal. A public ceremony followed a few days later. On the steps of St Peter's, the emperor genuflected three times and, after kissing the feet, hands, and mouth of the seated pope, who then rose and recited the *Te Deum*, the two entered the church together and celebrated mass.⁸

One may see in these events certain echoes of the unionist policy of the first Palaiologan emperor, Michael VIII, who turned to Rome in 1274 in the face of external threats. In fact, the essence of John V's profession of faith was the same as that made by Michael VIII at the Council of Lyons, in that it explicitly

⁶ The main study of John V in Europe is Oskar Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance à Rome* (Warsaw, 1930, repr. 1972). See also Barker, *Manuel II*, 1–83; Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 305–8; Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, “Jean V Paléologue à Venise (1370–1371),” *REB*, 16 (1958), 217–32; and Chrysostomides, “John V Palaeologus in Venice,” 76–84. On the wider context, see Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁷ This voyage was without precedent, as Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 264, pointedly notes: “because no former Byzantine emperor would have sunk his pride or demeaned his dignity to such an extent.” On this trip, see Halecki, *Empereur*, 111–37; F. Pall, “Encore une fois sur le voyage diplomatique de Jean V Paléologue en 1365–66,” *RESEE*, 9 (1971), 535–6; J. Gill, “John V Palaeologus at the Court of Louis I of Hungary (1366),” *BSI*, 38 (1977), 30–8.

⁸ See Frances Kianka, “Byzantine–Papal Diplomacy: The Role of Demetrios Kydones,” *International History Review*, 7(2) (1985), 175–215, especially 194–5; Frances Kianka, “Demetrios Kydones and Italy,” *DOP*, 49 (1995), 99–110; and Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 270.

proclaimed belief in the *filioque* and the primacy of the Roman Church. But unlike the thirteenth-century profession of the founder of the Palaiologan dynasty, John V's conversion was strictly personal and did not extend to his people.⁹ Another key difference between the two imperial conversions involves the emperor's physical presence. Michael VIII's conversion was mediated through delegates; he did not go in person to Rome and certainly did not perform *proskynesis* to the pope. He did, however, send gifts to Rome. En route to Lyons, a violent storm sank one of the two Byzantine ships bearing the lavish imperial gifts of golden icons, censers, and silks.¹⁰ Still other gifts did reach the pope, even if lost today. Recall the no-longer-extant *peplos* that depicted the emperor being led by the pope to St Peter discussed in Chapter 1.¹¹ As an ultimate visualization of the union, the embroidered imperial effigy acted as the emperor's surrogate to commemorate the union. By the late fourteenth century, however, the emperor's standing in the wider medieval world was significantly diminished and his image commanded less and less respect. The imperial crown jewels were in Venice and the emperor's gestures of submission and abasement were directed not to the Virgin's icon at the walls of Constantinople, but instead to the pope on the steps of St Peter's.

The crisis of Byzantine imperial succession following the mid-fourteenth-century civil war was resolved with the uniting of the Palaiologoi and Kantakouzenoi both politically and dynastically. As part of this union, John VI Kantakouzenos and John V Palaiologos served as co-emperors (see Figure 3.19), and the latter married the daughter of the former.¹² Both the coronation and the wedding were celebrated in 1347. At the coronation, Gregoras lamented the depleted state of the imperial treasury, pointedly characterizing its contents, as noted in the Introduction, as “the atoms of Epicurus.”¹³ By this time, the Byzantine crown was inlaid with mere colored glass, the

⁹ In fact, the Council of Lyons was brought up as an example of Michael VIII's tyranny and futile efforts to impose Rome by force. See Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 269–71.

¹⁰ Pachymeres, *De Michaele Palaeologis*, 1:384–5, cited in Deno J. Geanakoplos, “Bonaventure, the Two Mendicant Orders and the Greeks at the Council of Lyons (1274)” in *The Orthodox Church and the West* (Oxford, 1976), 207 [repr. *Constantinople and the West*, XI]. Supposedly because of time constraints, the altar cloth sent as a gift was taken from Hagia Sophia, and it was presented to the Great Church by the emperor when his anathema for the blinding of John Laskaris was lifted. See Geanakoplos, *Michael Palaeologus*, 258–9. I thank Kathleen Maxwell for this information, which will be part of her upcoming study of the Paris Greek manuscript 54.

¹¹ See discussion in Chapter 1.

¹² See Donald Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos* (Washington DC, 1968); and Donald Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c. 1295–1383* (Cambridge, 1996), 88.

¹³ Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia* II, 790.

original gems having been pawned by Anna of Savoy. Moreover, the feasting vessels used in the wedding reception were earthenware and lead, only aping the brilliance and sumptuousness of gold and jewels.¹⁴ Still further, both the imperial coronation and the wedding took place at the Blacherna because of the dilapidated state of Hagia Sophia. Funds for the Great Church's repair were eventually solicited and obtained from the Grand Duke of Moscow, but according to Gregoras, his contribution was diverted to fund Turkish mercenaries.¹⁵ In 1354 John VI Kantakouzenos abdicated and retired to a monastic life,¹⁶ and John V emerged as sole ruler of the beleaguered empire. By the 1370s, after he submitted to Rome in a futile attempt to solicit assistance, he submitted to Sultan Murad I. From this point onward, Byzantium paid tribute as an Ottoman vassal.

"Decline is dispiriting," observes Donald Nicol.¹⁷ Contemporary writers also shared this insight. Beyond the imperial treasury lamented by Gregoras, imperial territories were reduced to Constantinople and its immediate environs, parts of Thrace and Macedonia, Thessaloniki, and some islands in the Aegean. The Ottomans established authority and drew tribute from much of the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor.¹⁸ The lost Anatolian plains

¹⁴ Gregoras's description of the sham luxury of the wedding reception is invoked by Alice-Mary Talbot in "Revival and Decline: Voices from the Byzantine Capital," *BFP*, 22: "The palace was so poor that there was in it no cup or goblet of gold or silver; some were of pewter, all the rest of clay . . . most of the imperial diadems and garb showed only the semblance of gold and jewels; [in reality] they were of leather and were but gilded . . . To such a degree the ancient prosperity and brilliance of the Roman Empire had fallen, entirely gone out and perished, that, not without shame, I tell you this story." Becker, 1829–55, vol. II, 788–9 with English translation in A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire II* (Madison, 1952), 680.

¹⁵ Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 219.

¹⁶ Under the monastic name Iosaph, John VI Kantakouzenos spent the last thirty years of his life in the monastery of St George of the Mangara in Constantinople and devoted his energies to writing an extensive memoir, the *Histories*, several polemical treatises against Islam and Judaism, and apologies of Hesychasm. The deluxe copy of his theological writings in Paris (Paris Gr. 1242) preserves a series of significant images, including an unprecedented unique double portrait juxtaposing his effigy as emperor with that as monk. On this manuscript, see *BFP*, 286–7 (cat. no. 171) with bibliography and the important recent article by Ivan Drpić, "Art, Hesychasm, and Visual Exegesis: Parisinus Graecus 1242 Revisited," *DOP*, 62 (2008), 217–47, which contextualizes the manuscript's imagery in terms of a larger politics of Hesychasm. The relationship of Hesychasm to the visual arts and aesthetic theory of the Palaiologan period is, as Drpić notes, vast. A useful point of entry into the literature is Sergey S. Horuijy (ed.), *Hesychasm: An Annotated Bibliography* (Moscow, 2004).

¹⁷ Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 253.

¹⁸ As Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 19, puts it, "Almost all of Asia Minor, once the empire's backbone for manpower, food resources, and tax revenues, had long been lost to a number of Turkish principalities." See Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Fifteenth through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971); and Speros Vryonis, Jr., "The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia

are evoked with particularly nostalgic sadness in an epistolary exchange between Manuel II Palaiologos and Demetrios Kydones, his friend and teacher who had accompanied his father to Rome and read aloud his pronouncement of faith. In a letter written from Asia Minor in 1391, Manuel laments the sight of abandoned and ruined cities with forgotten names (Letter 16).¹⁹ When he inquired about the names of these cities now lying in ruin ("a pitiable spectacle for the people whose ancestors once possessed them"), he was met with a chilling reply: "We destroyed these cities, but time has erased their names."²⁰ Poignantly highlighting the diminished world of the Palaiologan period, Manuel expresses an awareness of the present ruinous state of the countryside in contrast to the great illustrious past. Kydones's response, in turn, underscores the emperor's lament: "For an emperor of the Romans to see cities, which had of old been peopled by the Romans, now under the lordship of the barbarians, cities which have cast off the name given by their settlers and exchanged it for those ruins, who would not be dejected in spirit and fill his eyes with tears?"²¹

Manuel and Demetrios Kydones were by no means the first or the only learned men of Byzantium to express their sadness and frustration with the much-changed world around them. As Ihor Ševčenko has shown, intellectuals of the time were well aware of the diminished status of the empire.²² The reality of both Western European dependence and Ottoman dominance profoundly threw into disorder traditionally held Byzantine self-perceptions of order and hierarchy.²³ In the face of Ottoman victories, some Byzantines

Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century: The Book in the Light of Subsequent Scholarship, 1971–98" in Antony Eastmond (ed.), *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-Third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, March 1999* (Aldershot, 2001), 1–15.

¹⁹ George Dennis (ed. and trans.), *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus: Text, Translation, and Notes* (Washington DC, 1977), 44–5. Letter 16: "The small plain in which we are now staying certainly had some name when it was fortunate enough to be inhabited and ruled by the Romans. But now when I ask what it was, I might as well ask about the proverbial wings of a wolf, since there is absolutely nobody to inform me."

²⁰ Letter 16 continues: "I was seized with such sorrow although I bore it in silence, since I was still able to manage some self-control. But as you can imagine, when someone having no idea of the ancient name of a city would instead call it by some barbaric and strange-sounding name, I lamented loudly and was scarcely able to conceal my distress." *Ibid.*, 44–5.

²¹ Kydones's letter cited *ibid.*, 50.

²² Ihor Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium Seen through the Eyes of its Intellectuals," *DOP*, 15 (1961), 167–86. See also H.-G. Beck, "Reichsidee und nationale Politik im späbyzantinischen Staat," *BZ*, 53 (1960), 86–94; and Anthony Kaldellis's recent work on historicism: "Historicism in Byzantine Thought and Literature," *DOP*, 61 (2007), 1–24.

²³ Vryonis, "Byzantine Cultural Self-Consciousness in the Fifteenth Century," 5–14, is instructive in this regard.

levied a moral critique, attributing the success of the empire's enemies to the sinfulness of its own society and administration.²⁴ Such an explanation was, of course, a *topos*: it had been understood that the 1204 fall of Constantinople to crusaders resulted from the Byzantines' sins of that historical moment. But sin having been expiated, the once-enslaved city was liberated, cleansed, and returned to Byzantine rule in 1261 as a sign of divine favor, as we saw in Part I of this book. Part II now turns to the much-changed world of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries – that is, to the empire's final century.

Under the rubric of what Gregoras called the “atoms of Epicurus,” the chapters that follow interrogate the very matter of the imperial treasury. The evocation of Gregoras's metaphor as the title for the second half of the book signals a focus on what was left in the Palaiologan imperial treasury in the final century of the empire, the precious matter protected, drawn out, and extended to convey an image of Byzantine eternal imperium in the face of constricted contemporary realities. Commencing in the early years of Manuel II Palaiologos's rule, Chapters 4 and 5 trace the emanation of imperial rhetoric, ritual, and gifts from the capital of the fragile later Byzantine Empire. External forces and internal strife propelled the emperor to take unprecedented steps in the construction of an expanded diplomatic network. Like his father, Western Europe figured prominently in his agenda and he traveled there in person, but he did not go to Rome or convert to Catholicism. His commitment to Orthodoxy remained steadfast, and considerable efforts were made to strengthen the fabric of the Orthodox *oikoumenē*; to this end, he arranged a marriage alliance with the royal Muscovite house in an attempt to strengthen those ties in particular. The next two chapters will follow these two diplomatic trajectories, first turning to the West and then to what is now known as Russia. But before proceeding, a more detailed consideration of the throne Manuel inherited is necessary in order to clarify the complicated and intertwined dynastic tensions, Ottoman aggressions, and Italian mercantile rivalries at play.

As the second son of John V Palaiologos, Manuel II's position on the throne was always under threat from the rival claims of his elder brother, Andronikos (IV), and his descendants. Rights to the Byzantine throne were transferred to Manuel II after the involvement of his older brother in an Ottoman–Byzantine conspiracy. In 1373 Andronikos (IV) and the sultan's

²⁴ In the later part of his study (“Decline,” 181–6), Ševčenko explains that the reversals in fate in the later Byzantine period, in addition to being explained through sinfulness, involved a fundamental rearrangement of the notions of historical process.

son plotted a joint *coup d'état* to overthrow their fathers. As a result of this attempted but ultimately failed usurpation, Manuel became the heir presumptive and the conspirators were punished.²⁵

Three years later, Andronikos IV plotted a new conspiracy with the support of both the Ottomans and the Genoese in Pera. Despite John V's existing alliance with Ottoman Sultan Murad I, Andronikos IV offered the sultan allegiance, tribute, and his sister's hand in marriage in exchange for troops.²⁶ With Genoese and Ottoman support, Andronikos entered the imperial city in August 1376, imprisoned his father and brothers, and assumed power.²⁷ Three years later, in 1379, John V and his sons escaped. After renegotiating the terms of their tribute to the sultan, John was restored to the Byzantine throne by Murad with Venetian support.²⁸ As the Ottoman ships conveying John back to Constantinople approached the city, Andronikos fled to Genoese Galata.²⁹ He continued to rebel unsuccessfully until his death in 1385 and thereafter his son, John VII,³⁰ took on his father's cause by

²⁵ See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 119; and Barker, *Manuel II*, 19–24. When the two princes were captured, Murad's son was blinded and beheaded, and John V's son was blinded, but he did not lose his sight completely. Already in 1370 tensions between John V and his eldest son were evident: recall that Andronikos refused to help his father when he was stranded in Venice penniless, as noted above, 199.

²⁶ The proposed marriage alliance would supersede dynastic ties to the Ottomans already forged by John V and the Kantakouzenoi. See Anthony Bryer, "Greek Historians on the Turks: The Case of the First Byzantine–Ottoman Marriage" in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages. Essays Presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981), 471–93; and Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 121–2.

²⁷ Barker, *Manuel II*, 27–9; Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 122; and Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 279–81. Andronikos was proclaimed emperor in October 1377. His father and brothers were imprisoned in the Tower of Anemas where Andronikos had formerly been held after his failed conspiracy. Andronikos also assigned the island of Tenedos to the Genoese, who had helped engineer the plot, but Venice refused to relinquish the island, thus exacerbating the longstanding commercial rivalries between Genoa and Venice in tandem with a full-scale war between the two maritime powers. As their reward, the Ottomans were given Gallipoli.

²⁸ As Nicol (*Last Centuries*, 281) points out, Murad was the kingmaker here. The issue of John V's conversion is key as well. Following his profession of Catholicism, his popularity in Constantinople was severely weakened and Andronikos was able to gain a strong following. See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 124–5. One of the key conditions for being restored to the throne was that John V had to agree that Andronikos IV and his son John VII be declared heirs to the throne in place of Manuel.

²⁹ He took with him as hostages key members of the imperial family: his grandfather John (VI) Kantakouzenos, a monk by then, his mother Helena Kantakouzene, and two aunts, possibly including Orhan's widow, Theodora Kantakouzene. See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 126–8; and Barker, *Manuel II*, 35, 38–9. They were all released later.

³⁰ John VII was also known as Andronikos, but he took his father's name to distinguish himself from his grandfather. See Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "John VII (Alias Andronicus)

attempting to claim the throne for himself. Echoing his father's previous usurpation, John VII, backed by the Ottomans and the Genoese, successfully seized the Byzantine capital for much of 1390 (from March to September).

Our principal account of John VII's short-lived usurpation of 1390 is Ignatius of Smolensk, who had arrived in Constantinople in 1389 as part of the entourage escorting the Russian metropolitan to the patriarchate for approval.³¹ Ignatius is explicit that John VII received much popular support in Constantinople. Common people, he claims, opened a city gate for the "usurper," who, after subduing the city, was cheered and publicly acclaimed in the streets. Moreover, the Russian account specifies that Manuel attempted to retake the city three times before successfully breaching the walls of the Golden Gate fortress, at which point he drove out his nephew and restored the imperial throne to his father.

This was the imperial family background and the immediate context for Manuel II's coronation in 1392 after the death of his father, John V. Memories of the usurpation were still very much alive, while popular opinion and allegiance remained divided.³² John VII, Manuel's nephew and twenty years his junior, still had many supporters. Their prolonged conflict continued throughout the 1390s and coincided with the major Ottoman siege of Constantinople, which lasted eight years and eventually prompted Manuel to seek western support in person at the end of the decade, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

To reinforce his position as legitimate emperor of the Romans, Manuel II was crowned and anointed in Hagia Sophia by Patriarch Anthony IV in February 1392 on the feast day of the Prodigal Son. Instead of the readings regularly appointed for this day, passages from Hebrews (12:28–13:8) and from John (10:1–8) were selected.³³ "We have been given possession of an

Palaeologus," *DOP*, 31 (1977), 339–42 [repr. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *Romania and the Turks (c. 1300–c. 1500)* (Aldershot, 1985), X]. Note that the popular acclamations that Ignatius of Smolensk records for John VII in 1390 were "Long live Andronikos."

³¹ He was in Constantinople for over two years from June 1389 to mid-February 1392. See Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 408ff., on the complicated ecclesiastical politics surrounding Ignatius's stay in Constantinople, which will be discussed only briefly in Chapter 5.

³² Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 131–40. On the feud between John VII and Manuel II, see Barker, *Manuel II*, 164–5. On John VII, see P. Wirth, "Zum Geschichtsbild Kaiser Johannis VII. Palaiologos," *Byzantion*, 35 (1965), 592–600; Zachariadou, "John VII (Alias Andronicus)," 339–42; John Barker, "John VII in Genoa: A Problem in Late Byzantine Source Confusion," *OCP*, 28 (1962), 213–38; and Nicolas Oikonomides, "John VII Palaeologus and the Ivory Pyxis at Dumbarton Oaks," *DOP*, 31 (1977), 329–38.

³³ The high political stakes are expressed by the readings selected for the coronation ceremony, which have astutely been read as "instruments of dynastic propaganda" by Stephen Reinert, "Political Dimensions of Manuel II Palaiologos' 1392 Marriage and Coronation" in Claudia

unshakeable kingdom,” the opening line of the Hebrews passage reads. The unshakeable kingdom (βασιλείαν ἄσάλευτον) refers both to the heavenly kingdom and also to the earthly empire that Manuel inherited and was crowned and anointed to rule as *basileus ton rhomaion*.³⁴ But his unshakeable kingdom was far from secure, as the second reading implied. With a parable of the Good Shepherd, the passage from John is essentially an injunction against usurpation, as Stephen Reinert astutely argues.³⁵ Significantly, the coronation ceremony, with its politically charged readings, was witnessed not only by Ignatius of Smolensk but also by members of both the Genoese and Venetian communities who had played such a prominent role in fueling the feud between the emperor and his nephew.

Despite Manuel II’s coronation in the Great Church by the patriarch, the threat of John VII continued to be a source of tension in the ensuing years. In a digression in the middle of his *Dialogue on Marriage*, a text that will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 5, the emperor lingers on an agreement made between John VII and Bayezid, son and successor of Murad. Apparently Bayezid agreed to let John VII keep Constantinople as a gift.³⁶ But the imperial city, Manuel maintains, was not the sultan’s to give:

the gifts of enemies, as they say, are no gifts, and a gift, how could it ever become a gift unless it belonged to the giver in the first place, and unless it had not belonged to the recipient in any sense? In this instance the giver, in making a gift, is acquiring, and the recipient, in turn, is losing.³⁷

In this passage, Manuel succinctly summarizes the dynamics of gift exchange and underscores the agonistic aspects of prestation. Here giving is motivated

Sode and Sarolta Takács (eds.), *Novum Millennium, Studies in Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck, 19 December 1999* (Aldershot, 2001), 296. While previous scholars have commented on the appropriateness of the analogy of Manuel with Lazarus, rising to power after the usurpation of John VII, Reinert draws attention to the content of the readings themselves as statements of legitimation. See Reinert, “Political Dimensions,” 295; Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 352, 358; and Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 431.

³⁴ The audience, in the words of Reinert, “Political Dimensions,” 298, “effectively perceived the lector reading as the emperor’s proxy, using the text to summarize what has just transpired in virtue of his anointment and coronation.”

³⁵ Reinert, “Political Dimensions,” 298, emphasizes that the reading from John ultimately stresses legitimacy (entering the right door, not climbing the fence illicitly) as an injunction to respect the lawful order lineage. John V selected Manuel as his successor and John VII was trying to interrupt this order.

³⁶ Athanasios D. Angelou (ed. and trans.), *Manuel Palaiologos, Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage* (Vienna, 1991), 98–100: “he [Bayezid] allows my nephew to keep the capital as a gift as long as he shows himself friendly and punctiliously keeps all the promises.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 100:716–19.

by the desire to acquire; giving aims at getting. Such a premise, as we saw in the Introduction, underlies the cultural anthropology of gift exchange. But this eloquent quotation operates within an ideological framework that is entirely Byzantine. The gift under discussion is the sacro-imperial city, the Queen of Cities delivered to the first Palaiologan ruler by the grace of the Virgin. It is the city that belongs to the Virgin and to which she belongs, a message reinforced by early Palaiologan gold coinage, as we saw in Chapter 3. Constantinople is not the Ottoman sultan's to give, nor John VII's to receive.³⁸

It is worth lingering momentarily on the relationship between Manuel II, John VII, Bayezid, and the imperial city. Manuel's *Dialogue* rails against Bayezid's audacity for thinking Constantinople was his to give and that it should be given to John VII. Here Manuel was reflecting on the turbulent and confusing events of the final years of his father John V's rule, where the imperial capital was seized and re-seized by members of the imperial family backed by the Ottomans, with the support of either Genoa or Venice. By the time Manuel wrote the *Dialogue*, he had secured the throne, but Bayezid's blockade of Constantinople in the 1390s forced him to travel to the West in search of support in 1399. Bayezid's blockade also forced a reconciliation between Manuel II and John VII, as evidenced by the fact that Manuel adopted John and appointed him as regent of Constantinople during his long absence (1399–1402).³⁹

Following the emperor's return to Constantinople in 1402, a transfer of power was effected, but it was far from seamless.⁴⁰ John VII threatened military action and eventually a compromise for shared imperial authority was struck. So as to each retain imperial status, the elder Manuel II would rule as emperor from Constantinople, while John VII would rule as "basileus of Thessaly" in Thessaloniki. To this end, they agreed to a system of alternating dynastic succession among their sons as follows. After the death of Manuel II, power was to transfer to John VII; after John VII's death,

³⁸ As a comparative legend, Doukas relates that in 1453, when Constantine XI was offered by Mehmed II the Morea and his life in exchange for Constantinople, the emperor replied: "surrendering the City is not in my power, nor in that of its other inhabitants; all of us with common will and purpose will die, with no regard for our lives." Ducas, *Istoria Turco-bizantina (1341–1462)* ed. Grecu (Bucharest, 1958), 311, cited in A. Laiou in the *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, 293.

³⁹ Oikonomides, "John VII Palaeologus," 331 n. 11, points out that several archival documents mention the adoption. Again, Manuel's travels to Western Europe will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

⁴⁰ On this transfer of power, see Barker, *Manuel II*, 238–41.

authority was to return to Manuel’s line and to his eldest son, John VIII, who would, in turn, be succeeded by John VII’s first son, Andronikos.⁴¹ A precondition for this reconciliation and system of power sharing hinged upon Manuel giving the city of Thessaloniki to his nephew.

A diminutive ivory *pyxis* in Dumbarton Oaks commemorates John VII’s installation in Thessaloniki in 1403 and visually evokes this specific arrangement for dynastic power sharing (Figure 4.0a).⁴² A celebratory frieze of dancing figures and musicians centers on an imperial family portrait consisting of two units: two emperors, empresses, and sons, all standing frontally and majestically, in contrast to the raucous festivities unfolding around them. All six figures are distinguished by *loroi*, crowns, and halos. They all hold scepters with one hand, and the emperors and their sons hold *akakia* in the other. The group on the left consists of John VII, his wife Irene, and their son Andronikos. On the right the triad consists of Manuel II, his wife Helena, and their son, the future John VIII. As static icons of imperium, the imperial figures are presented as a stilled imperial *tableau vivant*, recalling the imperial *prokypsis* ceremony – the imperial epiphany that became an essential component of Palaiologan ceremonial repertoire.⁴³ The hieratic solemnity of their portrayal – which is characteristic of Palaiologan imperial portraits, as Tania Velmans has shown⁴⁴ – is heightened by the sharp contrast with the celebratory frieze around them, with twisted figures in performance and an impressive array of wind and string instruments. The festivities culminate in the presentation of a city model of Thessaloniki to John VII on the far left of the *pyxis*, where an unnamed but distinctly non-imperial figure is pictured in profile and bent low on knee holding a large model of the city (Figure 4.0b).⁴⁵ The presentation of the city motivates the

⁴¹ This model for power sharing never went into effect as John VII died in 1408.

⁴² The prosopographic complexity of this *pyxis* has been explicated most convincingly by Oikonomides, “John VII Palaeologus,” 329–37. Previous interpretations include A. Grabar, “Une pyxide en ivoire à Dumbarton Oaks. Quelques notes sur l’art profane pendant les derniers siècles de l’Empire byzantin,” *DOP*, 14 (1960), 121–46 [repr. *L’art de la fin de l’antiquité et du moyen-âge*, 229–49]; and K. Weitzmann, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. III, Ivories and Steatites* (Washington DC, 1972), 77–82. See also *BFP*, 30–1 (cat. no. 5) with bibliography.

⁴³ See further discussion of the relationship of the Palaiologan *prokypsis* to imperial coronation ceremonial in Chapter 5.

⁴⁴ Velmans, “Le portrait,” 101–4.

⁴⁵ In some respects the imagery is related to Thessalonian coinage discussed in Chapter 3, where the model of the city features in close association with the ruler. On the peacock that accompanies the representation of Thessaloniki, see Oikonomides, “John VII Palaeologus,” 337.



(a)



(b)

Figure 4.0a–b *Pyxis* with imperial families and ceremonial scenes (Palaiologan *pyxis*),
Dumbarton Oaks

joyous mood of the celebration as it indicates an imperial *adventus*.⁴⁶ The city of Thessaloniki is thus represented as a gift being offered to John VII. Even though Manuel II gave the city to John VII, the *pyxis* separates the model of the city from the hands of either imperial figure and situates it instead in the hands of an anonymous member of the *adventus* festivities. It would be one thing for an emperor to be shown on his knees offering a city to a sacred or heavenly figure, as we saw with Michael VIII in Chapter 2, but quite another to be represented offering it to a rival claimant to the throne.

With its symbolic image of the ceding of Thessaloniki, the *pyxis* represents the resolution of the dynastic conflict between Manuel II and John VII by commemorating the terms that settled their feud. This message is reinforced by the imperial tableau itself and the sense of equilibrium in the stasis of the imperial figures: each member of the evenly spaced imperial triad bears the same attributes. Within this overarching configuration of symmetry, subtle formal differences indicate precedence in the service of illustrating the order of succession. The longer beard of Manuel II suggests his seniority in relation to John VII, whose beard is slightly shorter. The two junior imperial members are represented as beardless, but Manuel II's son, the future John VIII, is discernibly taller than John VII's son Andronikos. If we read these visual signs of precedence as Oikonomides has, the box pictures the precise order of succession upon which Manuel and John agreed.⁴⁷

Despite such a clearly delineated visual order, however, the inscriptions betray a pronounced tension. John VII and his family are all clearly labeled by inscriptions – Ἰω(άννης), Ἀνδρ(όνικος), Εἰρ(ήνη) – but this is not the case for the members of the imperial triad on the right. The emperor on the right is identified merely by the letter M, which has caused a great deal of confusion, the rectangular cartouche above the junior emperor to his right has been left blank altogether, and the rightmost empress lacks an inscription altogether. The clear contrast between these otherwise identical pairs of imperial images makes clear the tensions surrounding the plan to transfer power.⁴⁸ A clear preference is given to John VII's family, who are all named and to whom the city model is presented. While the design respects the rights of all the emperors, the lack of inscriptions for Manuel II's family

⁴⁶ Oikonomides (*ibid.*) has linked the musicians to Psalm 150, which is richly illustrated on folio 449v of the eleventh-century Vatican Psalter 752, on which see Kalavrezou, Trahoulia, and Sabar, “Critique of the Emperor”; and Evans and Wixom (eds.), *Glory of Byzantium*, 206–7 (cat. no. 142).

⁴⁷ Again, succession would essentially follow seniority from Manuel II to John VII to John VIII to Andronikos.

⁴⁸ Oikonomides, “John VII Palaeologus,” 337.

reveals a palpable sense of uncertainty, and even suspicion, about succession in the future. Ultimately, then, the box does not document the peaceful division of powers, but rather discloses conflict.⁴⁹

Finely tuned gradations of precedence such as this are typical of Byzantine imperial arts, especially gifts, through which complicated messages of hierarchy are evoked. We can assume that the *pyxis* was commissioned by partisans of John VII, perhaps even as a gift for him or his family, but without a more specific context, such an interpretation must remain speculative.⁵⁰ In contrast to this box with its veiled evocation of internal Palaiologan strife, the next two chapters consider two equally complicated visualizations of imperial hierarchy created within a decade of the *pyxis*. But these two sumptuous gifts, as we will see, project a unified imperial office to the external world.

⁴⁹ For an interesting parallel in Al-Andalus, see Francisco Prado-Vilar, "Circular Visions of Fertility and Punishment: Caliphal Ivory Caskets from al-Andalus," *Muqarnas*, 14 (1997), 20–41. According to Prado-Vilar's reading, the tenth-century ivory *pyxis* in the Louvre was given to Al-Mughira as a warning about usurping the proper line of succession. Like the Byzantine *pyxis*, the Caliphal ivory's messages of hierarchy required close examination. Only upon turning the object in one's hand do dynastic tensions come into clear focus.

⁵⁰ Oikonomides, "John VII Palaeologus," 337.

4 | Rhetoric as diplomacy: imperial word, image, and presence

Plato's coins

News of the death of his father, Emperor John V Palaiologos, reached Manuel Palaiologos while he was on campaign in Asia Minor with Bayezid I, son and successor of Murad I. The empire inherited by Manuel was in essence an Ottoman vassal state: Manuel answered to Bayezid, whose will was erratic and often violent.¹ On campaign with Ottoman forces in the summer of 1391, the newly crowned Byzantine Emperor wrote the first of eight letters to his teacher and friend Demetrios Kydones, who had long ago accompanied his father to Rome. In Letter 14 Manuel writes:

But do you wish to learn exactly what circumstances we find ourselves in? I feel sure you do, and I would have satisfied your curiosity if the present situation did not prevent us in every way. I think it is enough to say just this: we exchange fear for fear, danger for danger, labor for labor, small compared to the more serious ones, I mean, those we now undergo in league with the Persians compared to those we can expect from them if we do not fight along with them, just as the coins your companion Plato speaks of.²

¹ See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 117–48; and Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 296–317, especially 301–2. Manuel continued the tributary alliance with Bayezid that had originally been established between their fathers John V and Murad I in 1372–3. In practical terms, this tributary vassalage entailed Manuel rendering Bayezid tribute, military aid on demand, and attending court when summoned. See Stephen Reinert, “Manuel II Palaeologos and His Müderris” in Ćurčić and Mouriki (eds.), *The Twilight of Byzantium*, 39; and Stephen Reinert, “The Palaiologoi, Yildirim Bayezid, and Constantinople” in Milton V. Anastos (ed.), *To Hellenikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.* (New Rochelle, 1993), 289–365.

² Letter 14: Dennis, *The Letters*, 38–9 (and Barker, *Manuel II*, 84–105). Beyond friend and teacher, Kydones was also an important intellectual and diplomatic intermediary. In the latter capacity, for example, he accompanied John V to Rome, as noted already. On Kydones, see *PLP* no. 13876; Demetrios Kydones, *Démétrius Cydonès: Correspondance*, edited by Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, 2 vols. (Vatican, 1956–60); Frances Kianka, “The Apology of Demetrios Cydones: A Fourteenth-Century Autobiographical Source,” *Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines*, 7 (1980), 57–71; Kianka, “Byzantine–Papal Diplomacy,” 175–213; Kianka, “Demetrios Kydones and Italy,” 99–110; Sophia Mergiali-Sahas, *L’enseignement et les lettres pendant l’époque des Paléologues (1261–1453)* (Athens, 1996), 125–41; Sophia Mergiali-Sahas, “A Byzantine Ambassador to the West and His Office During the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” *BZ*, 94(2) (2001), 594–5; and most recently John Barker, “Emperors, Embassies, and Scholars,

True to most of his letters and to the Byzantine epistolary genre in general, the text is both allusive and elusive. Rather than conveying factual information or describing in detail the bellicose circumstances under which he writes, Manuel offers an analogy to antiquity that requires decoding. It is precisely the kind of rhetorical interpretive work with which his reader was not only familiar but a master. Campaigning with Bayezid is equated to being in league with the Persians and is explained as the lesser of evils through “your companion” Plato’s philosophical economy of Virtue as represented by coins.

George Dennis, who edited and translated Manuel’s letters, points out that this obvious paraphrase of Plato’s *Phaedo* was probably produced from memory.³ It is understandable, therefore, that the paraphrase does not match the original passage exactly. But the difference between the two texts is instructive nonetheless. Plato’s discourse argues emphatically against the exchange of experiences like a coin, as currency. He characterizes wisdom (φρόνησις) as the only currency of virtue:

this is not the right way to purchase virtue, by exchanging pleasures for pleasures, and pains for pains, and fear for fear, and greater for less, as if they were coins, but the only right coinage, for which all those things must be exchanged and by means of and with which all these things are to be bought and sold, is in fact wisdom.⁴

The Byzantine emperor’s list of transactable pairs features fear, danger, and labor – but not pleasure. Moreover, Plato specifies “greater for less,” while Manuel implies lesser to greater or smaller to more grave. This reversal creates an apologetic tone that underscores a sense of uneasiness about serving the Ottomans, an uneasiness that comes out much more forcefully in other letters.⁵ The weight of being in league with the enemy is explicitly evoked in comparative terms in another letter to Kydones: “it is especially unbearable to have to fight along with those and on behalf of those whose

Diplomacy and the Transmission of Byzantine Humanism to Renaissance Italy” in Dimitar Angelov (ed.), *Church and Society in Late Byzantium* (Kalamazoo, 2009), 159–62.

³ Plato’s *Phaedo* is also alluded to in Letters 42 and 39, which were both written by the emperor while he was in Paris in 1401, as well as Letters 26, 68, and 39.

⁴ *Phaedo*, 69a–b.

⁵ The emperor describes not only the harsh conditions of famine and cold in another letter but also the “constant expectation of battle” and the “murderous blade” that spared no one (“For every mouth which is opened in answer is immediately closed by the sword”). This last quotation is from Letter 16, which was already cited in the Introduction to Part II (see Dennis, *The Letters*, 48 n. 1). On the campaign, see Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 87–98; Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Manuel II Palaeologos on the Strife between Bayezid I and Kadi Burhan al-Din Ahmad,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 43 (1980), 471–81 [repr. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *Romania and the Turks (c. 1300–c. 1500)* (Aldershot, 1985), IV].

every increase in strength lessens our own strength.”⁶ Such an assessment of his situation in terms of profit and loss recalls the emperor’s invocation of Plato’s coins, which itself does nothing to support the Byzantine cooperation with Bayezid’s forces, but rather reveals how his actions run against the pursuits of Virtue. In this sense, the reference to Plato’s coins constitutes an encoded lament of his complicity with the Persians of his day.⁷

The metaphor of *phronesis* as *nomisma*, wisdom as coin, in Plato’s original and Manuel’s paraphrase is of particular urgency at the time of the letter’s composition. As noted in the previous chapter, gold coinage ceased to be struck by the mid-fourteenth century. The *hyperpyron*, which once proclaimed the divinely sanctioned imperial image with the Virgin of the Walls, was only a money of account by the time Manuel II Palaiologos was writing.⁸ Although in his letter from the Anatolian front, Manuel gestures toward the metaphor of currency from the *Phaedo* to characterize the necessity of remaining in league with the modern-day Persians, his rhetoric in fact encapsulates the critical disjunction in the later Byzantine period between fewer coins and more metaphors in circulation. The elevated erudition of a tight-knit group of literati, including both the writer and the addressee of the letter, stands in sharp contrast to the political and economic realities of the much-beleaguered empire of the era. In another letter written to Kydones in 1383, the emperor emphasizes that they are rich in words, though otherwise impoverished: “Suidas arrived here to find that we were in need of money, but instead of money, he only made us rich in words. But bringing an owl to Athens did not take care of our needs.”⁹ The point here, as will be developed in this chapter, is that Manuel’s verbal and visual rhetoric emerges as one of the primary diplomatic currencies of later Byzantium.

How we characterize the disjunction between the richness of the late Byzantine rhetorical tradition and the impoverished realities of imperial dominion is a matter of debate and also of methodology. Dennis describes this disjunction as a “fundamental dishonesty”: “while living in one world,

⁶ Letter 19 to Kydones: Dennis, *The Letters*, 56.

⁷ Reinert, “Manuel II Palaeologos and His Mūderris,” 40–1, comments on the emperor’s “nagging awareness that by acting as Bayezid’s ally he was in fact contributing to the further weakening of his own political and military situation.”

⁸ On the coinage of Manuel II Palaiologos, see *DOCV/I*, 213–23 and *DOCV/II*, plates 73–80. Manuel’s coinage is all of silver and copper. Four gold specimens long considered copies of an original gold coronation issue appear to be modern forgeries. The debate is succinctly summarized by Grierson, *DOCV/I*, 214–15.

⁹ Letter 4: Dennis, *The Letters*, 12. The expression, which indicates doing something superfluous, Dennis (*The Letters*, 14 n. 3) informs us, is equivalent to the English phrase of bringing coals to Newcastle.

they [Manuel's writings] speak from another."¹⁰ Amidst the dire circumstances of the period, the practice of writing, exchanging, and listening to the letters read aloud salon-style is seen as profoundly disingenuous escapism. Manuel himself seems to acknowledge the problem. With Bayezid's forces in Asia Minor in the winter of 1391, he chooses to write another letter to Kydones clandestinely, "in a small tent at night":

It is as though I were hiding, for those who cannot bear to see me devote my time to literary interests when I am at home would be far more vociferous in their criticism if they could see me doing the same thing out here. While they really have themselves to blame for all the trials they have endured and are still enduring, they would turn things upside down and place the blame on literary studies, in the belief that I, and, quite obviously, perhaps you too, are not free of guilt.¹¹

Manuel thus acknowledges a perceived tension between the literary pursuits he shares with Kydones and the present socio-political realities (τῶν κακῶν). But he stresses that it is wrong to place the blame on literary studies.

In their composition, exchange, and performance, Manuel's letters were conceptualized as gifts, much like the thirteenth-century ekphrases and encomia Manuel Holobolos wrote for Michael VIII Palaiologos. The letters exhibit a temporal disconnect, linking their audience and writers to classical authors who are characterized as living (recall "your companion Plato" in Letter 14), making the past alive and silencing the harsh contemporary world. In light of this, the present chapter attempts to rethink the relationship between, on the one hand, cultural production and circulation and, on the other, the harsh diplomatic realities of the later Byzantine period. While in the earlier periods of Byzantium, the emperor's effigy and decree circulated throughout the realm and beyond to proclaim his sovereignty, in the final two centuries, the emperor himself traveled beyond the confines of the imperial capital in an attempt to secure allies. Using the letters of Manuel II as a rhetorical framework or architecture, this chapter disentangles key strands of a thick network of mobility: the imperial body, the written word, and material gifts. It considers the implications of the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xviii. Dennis elaborates this position further and vividly: "With Turkish siege weapons pounding the city, [Manuel] and his friends could calmly sit around in a 'theater' and applaud a piece of rhetorical fluff being read to them." Furthermore, Dennis, "Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality" in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture*, 135, points out that extant imperial panegyric "seems to flourish as the empire declines . . . It was, one suspects, one way of closing one's eyes to the reality and living in an illusion." On the epistolary genre in general, see the recent essay by Stratis Papaioannou, "Letter-Writing" in Stephenson (ed.), *Byzantine World*, 188–99.

¹¹ Letter 19: Dennis, *The Letters*, 58.

emperor's nearly four-year-long mission to Western Europe (1399–1402) and the constellation of diplomatic gestures and objects involved, including a subsequent gift sent to Paris in 1408: the celebrated Louvre copy of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite with its rich genealogy of philosophy, hagiography, and iconography. The later part of this chapter reads this gift not only within the context of the other material offerings associated with the emperor's westward mission but also within the history of Dionysian thought. Neoplatonic theories of procession and return, the very content of the book, offer a proximate lens for reading Byzantine conceptions of prestation and hierarchy. The gift of this book, in other words, engages pictorial, philosophical, and textual traditions central to notions of imperial identity in this impoverished era.

Aristophanes's Blind Fortune

In another letter written to Kydones toward the end of the Ottoman campaign in Asia Minor in the winter of 1391, Manuel invokes the ancient political satire of Aristophanes. "I suspect that if the Comedian were still alive and could see that man," he writes in reference to Bayezid, "he might compose a play as he once did about Wealth. Today he would portray Blind Fortune."¹² As in his earlier letter involving Plato's coins, Manuel explicates the political situation, essentially his vassalage to the Ottoman sultan, through recourse to an economy of exchange and remuneration tied to an ancient philosopher. While Bayezid has profited from "our dangers, labors, and constant expenditures" – notably, two of the same exchangeable pairs invoked in Letter 14 with reference to Plato's coin – the emperor wishes for nothing more as a reward than to cut his losses and return home. The letter concludes with the invocation to "deliver us from this present evil and lead us back as swiftly as possible to the prosperity of our ancestors."¹³

Manuel II did return home, but not to the prosperity of his ancestors. Within a few years, in 1394, the Ottoman sultan made decisive moves

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.* "In return for our dangers, labors, and constant expenditures, which that man [Bayezid] thoughtfully admits have weighed the scales very much in his favor against his enemies, he promises to reward us lavishly. Yet, as long as I am of sound mind, I would consider it a lavish enough reward if he would not take away any more of the possessions we still have. Assuredly, if he should see fit to improve our situation in any way, this must clearly be ascribed to God alone. May he who is good and holds all in his hand deliver us from this present evil and lead us back as swiftly as possible to the prosperity of our ancestors."

on Constantinople itself, first scorching and depopulating the outskirts of the city then blockading it entirely. The siege of the Byzantine imperial city was sparked by Manuel's disobedience to his Ottoman overlord. The emperor and other Christian vassals had been summoned during the winter of 1393–4 to Serres to reaffirm their oaths to Bayezid.¹⁴ Manuel obeyed this summons, but refused a subsequent one, a refusal that prompted the sultan to send forces to Constantinople. But, as Nevra Necipoğlu points out, we should view these actions less as a cause and more as a pretext for the Ottoman siege. Bayezid imposed a policy of direct control over his vassal states with the ultimate goal of "building a unified empire with a centralized government, stretching from the Danube in the West to the Euphrates in the East."¹⁵ Constantinople, therefore, was central to Bayezid's larger ambitions. The eight-year-long siege of the city inaugurated in 1394 was briefly interrupted in 1396 when Bayezid was momentarily distracted by the Crusade launched by King Sigismund of Hungary that required Ottoman forces at Nikopolis.¹⁶ The crusaders were defeated, and one of Manuel's letters written shortly after the battle evokes the horror of the devastation, describing Bayezid vividly as a force of nature, a "thunderbolt," and a "deluge."¹⁷ Following this battle, Bayezid's attentions returned to Constantinople and he stepped up his siege of the famed but utterly depleted imperial capital. Another of Manuel's letters betrays the despondency caused by these intensified efforts. "As long as this present darkness prevails," he writes to Kydones, who was in northern Italy by this time, "there is nothing left but to weep, which indeed we are doing."¹⁸ In the next and final sentence of the letter, however, he maintains his faith and at least a semblance of optimism: "Still, we have not completely cast away our good hopes, for we look forward to better things given freely from the Treasury of Good."¹⁹

¹⁴ Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 301, describes the meeting in Serres as a successful "exercise in psychological warfare" in that it "struck terror into those who had been summoned."

¹⁵ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and Latins*, 30–1. On the relation between Manuel's break with Bayezid and the composition of the *Dialogue with a Persian*, see Reinert, "Manuel II Palaeologos and His Müderris," 46–8; and E. Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos, Dialogue mit einem "Perser"* (Vienna, 1966).

¹⁶ The Battle of Nikopolis took place in September 1396. French Marshall Jean le Meingre, Maréchal de Boucicaut, who was among the prisoners taken at Nikopolis. See Barker, *Manuel II*, 133–7.

¹⁷ The dynamic – and beautiful – description is found in Letter 31 written to Kydones, who was in northern Italy at the time. Dennis, *The Letters*, 80. Letter 31 will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 5.

¹⁸ Dennis proposes that the desperation of the last paragraph of this letter suggests that it dates to the intensification of the siege from the winter of 1396 through the spring of 1397.

¹⁹ Letter 33: Dennis, *The Letters*, 92: παρὰ τοῦ τῶν ἀγαθῶν θησαυροῦ.

While the emperor's letter expresses hope for the generosity of the Treasury of Good, the protracted siege of Constantinople continued unabated until 1402. Ottoman forces blockaded the city, guarding the land walls and patrolling the city's perimeter by sea, thus limiting the transportation of supplies, food, and information.²⁰ The ensuing famine, especially toward the end of the siege, prompted large numbers of inhabitants to flee the city, some to Genoese or Venetian-controlled territories and others even to the side of the Ottomans. Morale was low among all strata of society who remained in the city during the course of its long siege. Wealthy merchants and businessmen engaged in excessive profiteering activities and thus further exacerbated the abject poverty.²¹ The administration adopted extreme measures in an attempt to raise money, including the requisition of cultural and sacred treasures. Golden disks were removed from the Great Church, presumably to be melted down for coinage, and pieces of the Passion relics, including the tunic of Christ, were offered as securities to secure a loan from Venice.²²

In the wake of the crusader defeat at Nikopolis, the emperor increased his efforts to secure aid from the West, while the patriarch simultaneously appealed to the metropolitan in Russia for funds.²³ As news of the devastation spread to the West, representatives of Venice, commercially invested in Constantinople as ever, encouraged the Byzantine emperor to seek aid from Western Europe and offered Manuel transportation and hospitality in the event that he had to leave the imperial city.²⁴ In 1397, with his capital under heavy blockade, Manuel sent an embassy to France and England. His letter

²⁰ See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and Latins*, 149–83, on the concrete realities of economic life in the city under siege, with, for example, a detailed analysis of prices of grain and wine.

²¹ Necipoğlu sums up the situation succinctly (*ibid.*, 180): "Dilapidated or demolished houses, unattended monasteries and churches, uncultivated gardens, vineyards, and fields were spread throughout the depopulated city that was daily losing growing numbers of inhabitants to Italian or Ottoman territories. Furthermore, those who remained in the city not only had to struggle with starvation and exhausted revenues but also had to protect themselves from opportunistic people who engaged in profiteering." See also Nevra Necipoğlu, "Economic Conditions in Constantinople During the Siege of Bayezid I (1394–1402)" in Cyril A. Mango and Gilbert Dragon (eds.), *Constantinople and its Hinterland* (Aldershot, 1995), 157–67.

²² Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and Latins*, 154–5; and Sophia Mergiali-Sahas, "An Ultimate Wealth for Inauspicious Times: Holy Relics in Rescue of Manuel II Palaeologus' Reign," *Byzantion*, 76 (2006), 268–9. The Venetians did not extend this loan. See the discussion below about these relics, 227–30 – in all likelihood they were later brought to Western Europe with Manuel.

²³ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and Latins*, 155; Barker, *Manuel II*, 150–2. See the next chapter for more on Russia.

²⁴ Barker, *Manuel II*, 124–5.

to Charles VI of France speaks of the devastation caused by the “impious tyrant, the Turk Basita, lord of the Turks, enemy to Jesus Christ and to the entire Catholic faith.”²⁵ In a pledge of assistance, Charles sent an expedition of over a thousand men to Constantinople, headed by Jean le Meingre, Maréchal de Boucicaut, in 1399.²⁶ Although this assistance improved the immediate situation slightly, a much more substantial force was necessary and Boucicaut urged the emperor to appeal to the French king in person. Manuel then embarked upon the most celebrated episode of his life, his personal diplomatic expedition to the courts of Western Europe.

Son of Laertes

In one of Manuel’s letters written to the Priest Euthymius, the emperor refers to himself as Odysseus, the “son of Laertes long[ing] for the smoke of home.”²⁷ This letter was written in Paris in the late spring of 1401, at which time the emperor had been in Western Europe for over a year, since the end of 1399. He would not return to Constantinople until the autumn of 1402.²⁸ This was his first official mission to Europe as emperor, although he had traveled westward before in the diplomatic service of his father, John V. As noted above in the Introduction to Part II, he had accompanied his father to Hungary in 1366 (where he was detained as a hostage) and he rushed to

²⁵ Barker (*ibid.*, 154–5) translates the Latin version of the original bilingual letter and also provides the Latin in the appendix (488–9).

²⁶ Likewise, in April 1398 (and reiterated in March of 1399), Pope Boniface IX issued a bull urging financial contributions for a new crusade against the Turks on behalf of the Byzantines. See Barker, *Manuel II*, 158. On Jean II le Meingre Boucicaut, see Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient au XIV^e siècle. Expéditions du Maréchal Boucicaut* (Paris, 1886), 337–83; and Denis Lalande (ed.), *Le Livre des fais du bon messire Jehan Le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Jennes* (Geneva, 1985). On Richard II’s response to Manuel’s letters, see Donald M. Nicol, “A Byzantine Emperor in England. Manuel II’s Visit to London in 1400–1401,” *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 12 (1971), 206, and on the collection of funds in England for the Crusade, see 209 and 217–19.

²⁷ Letter 40: Dennis, *The Letters*, 106. On Euthymius, to whom four of Manuel’s letters are addressed, see Dennis, *The Letters*, xl–xli.

²⁸ The principal studies of Manuel’s long European sojourn include J. M. Berger de Xivrey, “Mémoire sur la vie et les ouvrages de l’empereur Manuel Paléologue,” *Mémoires de l’Institut de France, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 19(2) (1851), 1–201; A. Vasiliev, “Puteshestvie vizantijskago imperatora Manuila Palaeologa po zapadnoi Evrope,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, n.s. 39 (1912), 41–78, 260–304 (my thanks to Larisa Bondarchuk for assistance with this essay); Gustave Schlumberger, “Un Empereur de Byzance à Paris et Londres” in *Byzance et les Croisades* (Paris, 1927), 87–142, 361–2; M. A. Andreeva, “Zur Reise Manuels II. Palaiologos nach Westeuropa,” *BZ*, 34(1) (1937), 37–47; Nicol, “A Byzantine Emperor”; as well as Barker, *Manuel II*.

his father's aid in Venice in 1370. Unlike these earlier trips, when Manuel traveled to Western Europe as Emperor of the Romans, he was treated with considerably more respect.

Manuel set out on his celebrated westward journey with Boucicaut early in December 1399, leaving Constantinople in the hands of his nephew John VII.²⁹ In April 1400, he arrived in Venice, then crossed Italy toward France via Vicenza, Pavia and Milan, where at the court of Giangaleazzo Visconti he was reunited with Manuel Chrysoloras – the emperor's friend, advisor, and scholar who, in the words of Donald Nicol, was “busily exploiting the new market for Greek learning in Italy.”³⁰ Chrysoloras had been teaching Greek in Florence since February 1397 and came to Milan at the request of Giangaleazzo Visconti and the Byzantine emperor, where he was charged with administering the funds raised in support of Constantinople.³¹ Chrysoloras remained in northern Italy, teaching in Lombardy and honoring his duties to the emperor while Manuel traveled on to Paris.

Just outside Paris in June 1400, an elaborate reception was held for the Byzantine emperor, personally presided over by Charles VI.³² Manuel's Greek customs fascinated the French.³³ He received lavish gifts and grants, and was also entertained with festivals – he even participated in a royal hunt.³⁴ Furthermore, Charles VI had a wing of the Louvre redecorated

²⁹ Regarding the feud between John VII and Manuel II, see the discussion in the Introduction to Part II.

³⁰ Nicol, “A Byzantine Emperor,” 211. Scholarship on Chrysoloras is extensive. See *PLP* no. 31165; G. Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'umanesimo. I. Manuele Crisolora* (Florence, 1941); Ian Thompson, “Manuel Chrysoloras and the Early Italian Renaissance,” *GRBS*, 7 (1966), 63–82; Sophia Mergiali-Sahas, “Manuel Chrysoloras (ca. 1350–1415), an Ideal Model of a Scholar-Ambassador,” *Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines*, n.s. 3 (1998) 1–12; Mergiali-Sahas, “A Byzantine Ambassador,” 598–602; Lydia Thorn-Wickert, *Manuel Chrysoloras (ca. 1350–1415): eine Biographie des byzantinischen Intellektuellen vor dem Hintergrund der hellenistischen Studien in der italienischen Renaissance* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006); Barker, “Emperors, Embassies, and Scholars,” 162–6.

³¹ More on this below, 231–6. According to Mergiali-Sahas, “A Byzantine Ambassador,” 600, Chrysoloras was charged “with the administration of funds generated by the indulgences which Pope Boniface IX (1389–1404) had issued in aid of Constantinople.” See also Barker, “Emperors, Embassies, and Scholars,” 164.

³² See the *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys contenant le règne de Charles VI de 1380 à 1422* (Latin and French translation by Bellaguet, 1842) (Paris, 1994), II, Book 21, Chapter 1, 756–9. See also Barker, *Manuel II*, 397.

³³ On the influence of his visit, as well as the Battle of Nikopolis, on early contemporary visual culture in France, in particular in terms of “Orientalizing” dress, see Joyce Kubinski, “Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cité des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master),” *Gesta*, 40(2) (2001), 161–80.

³⁴ Barker, *Manuel II*, 175.

to house him, and he was well received by professors at the Sorbonne.³⁵ The first of his letters from France, written to Chrysoloras, who was in northern Italy at the time carrying on his fundraising and educational duties, suggests the initial difficulties of language differences, but concludes with a positive assessment of “the most illustrious King” Charles VI of France and his entourage. It expresses optimism regarding his prospects of garnering support.³⁶

From Paris, Manuel set out for London in October 1400, crossing the Channel in December after a brief stay in Calais.³⁷ In England too, his presence commanded respect: he was showered with gifts and, in addition to a lavish Christmas celebration, tournaments were staged in his honor, as well as a masquerade.³⁸ Ultimately, however, the reception of Manuel is best characterized by an odd combination of reverence tinged with pity, more specifically reverence for the past greatness represented by the emperor and pity for his present much-diminished circumstances. Adam of Usk, a lawyer in the court of King Henry IV, laments precisely this:

O God! What has become of you, ancient glory of Rome? Today your imperial greatness lies in ruins for all to see, so that it can in truth be said of you, in the words of Jeremiah, “The Prince among the provinces has been laid under tribute.” Who would ever believe that you, accustomed as you were to sitting on your throne of majesty and ruling the entire world, would now be reduced to such straits that you cannot afford any help whatsoever to the Christian faith?³⁹

³⁵ Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople* (Cambridge, 1965), 1; and Berger de Xivrey, “Mémoire,” 99–111.

³⁶ The final paragraph of Letter 37 reads: “unless the usual malice of evil fortune should oppose us, and some terrible and unexpected obstacle should occur, we have good reason to hope that we shall return to the fatherland soon, which is what we know you are praying for and what our enemies are praying against.” See Dennis, *The Letters*, 100 (and also Barker, *Manuel II*, 175).

³⁷ In September 1400 Manuel II moved to Calais, where he stayed for two months before crossing the Channel in December. Barker, *Manuel II*, 178, notes that Manuel’s decision to move on to London coincided with Charles VI’s slip into a spell of insanity. Cf. Julian Chrysostomides, *Manuel II Palaeologus Funeral Oration on His Brother Theodore: Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes* (Thessalonike, 1985), 162–4. See Nicol, “A Byzantine Emperor.”

³⁸ All chroniclers of Manuel’s visit mention that the English king paid for all his entertainment, which was lavish and expensive. Furthermore, the emperor’s travel expenses to and from England were likewise covered by the English monarch (including the two months in Calais awaiting transfer to England). See Nicol, “A Byzantine Emperor,” 212 and 215, as well as the account of Adam Usk cited below.

³⁹ C. Given-Wilson (ed. and, trans.), *The Chronicle of Adam Usk, 1377–1421* (Oxford, 1997), 121. See also Nicol, “A Byzantine Emperor,” 214; and Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople*, 1 and 205 n. 1.

On one level, the rhetoric of this passage is self-evident. The ancient glory of Rome is undone and ruined. Such a sentiment matches contemporary Byzantine laments such as that of Gregoras, who concludes his description of the false sumptuousness on display at the marriage and coronation of 1347 as follows: “To such a degree the ancient prosperity and brilliance of the Roman Empire had fallen, entirely gone out and perished, that, not without shame, I tell you this story.”⁴⁰ But unlike the shame expressed by the Byzantine author at the diminished state of affairs, there is also a moralizing tone to the English lawyer’s observations – a sense of fallen pride. This often-cited passage directly follows a description of the dress and visual appearance of the emperor and his entourage in which the lawyer claims that the Byzantines condescendingly disapproved of the English fashions.⁴¹ The passage wrestles with age-old stereotypes of Byzantium – aloof, devout, conformist – and the realities of the emperor’s current diplomatic supplication. Clearly, seeing the emperor in person is an important component of this exchange. The bodily presence of the emperor blurs the crisp distinction between the majestic and timeless icon of imperium and the actuality of a mortal ruler in need.⁴²

Manuel’s letter to Chrysoloras from London suggests rising anxieties over the prospect of western aid. But he writes that those anxieties are coming to an end thanks to the King of England, Henry IV, who has, he claims, pledged assistance in specific terms. The letter ends on this heartening note: “he is providing us with military assistance, with soldiers, archers, money, and ships to transport the army where it is needed.”⁴³ After a visit of less

⁴⁰ See note 14 in the Introduction to Part II.

⁴¹ Given-Wilson (ed.), *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, 120–1: “This emperor and his men always went about dressed uniformly in long robes cut like tabards which were all of one colour, namely white, and disapproved greatly of the fashions and varieties of dress worn by the English, declaring that they signified inconsistency and fickleness of heart.” He goes on to comment on the beards of the priests and the changing of the clerics.

⁴² The text concludes: “I thought to myself how sad it was that this great Christian leader from the remote east had been driven by the power of the infidels to visit distant islands in the west in order to seek help against them.” Liudprand of Cremona conveys a story that encapsulates the distinction between the reality of the emperor as a person and the icon of imperium propagated throughout the empire and beyond. The Emperor Leo, Liudprand claims, snuck out from the imperial palace at night unrecognized in order to test the faithfulness of his guards. After receiving a beating and being imprisoned overnight, Leo asked the guard if he recognized the emperor, to which the guard responded: “How could I recognize him . . . when I cannot remember seeing him? On the rare occasion when I looked on from afar . . . while he processed through the public, he seemed to me something marvelous and not a man.” See Liudprand of Cremona, *Complete Works*, 50–1.

⁴³ Letter 38; Dennis, *The Letters*, 102.

than two months, Manuel retraced his steps to Paris, laden with gifts and money from the English sovereign.⁴⁴

Much of Manuel's writing from this period is marked by a tone of optimism. At some point during his time in France, he composed an *ekphrasis* on a tapestry he saw in the Louvre – a cheerfully themed “Description of Spring in a Dyed Woven Hanging.” Drawing inspiration from Libanios and Gregory of Nazianzos, it describes playfulness and the pleasure and freedom of a hunt, concluding that “the inspiration, of course, is spring itself – sorrow's end, or, if you like, joy's beginning.”⁴⁵

Like the mood of the tapestry *ekphrasis*, a letter written in Paris in the spring to summer of 1401 to Euthymius in Constantinople also expresses optimism:

now that our negotiations are moving along very smoothly in every respect; now that the military commanders have already begun work on those tasks which should make them become in actuality what they are called; and now that nothing else is needed except the coming of the day appointed for setting out on our return journey to you . . . Not far beyond the present message of good news we ourselves expect to arrive . . . [followed by] . . . an army vastly surpassing your hopes.

Western promises, Manuel states with confidence, were on the verge of becoming a reality. But even with such optimism, there is a tension between actual events and Manuel's rhetoric. The tone remains hopeful, but the phrasing belies a slight hesitance. “I am aware that your salvation requires deeds, not promises,” he writes to Demetrios Chrysoloras in Constantinople at this time.⁴⁶ While initially dubious about the fulfillment of these “most wondrous promises,” he had been given specific assurances – Boucicaud had been appointed commander of troops and all that remained was the

⁴⁴ Barker, *Manuel II*, 178–81; Schlumberger, “Un Empereur,” 122–3; Berger de Xivry, “Mémoire,” 108–9. On the relations between the English and French courts at this time, see Nicol, “A Byzantine Emperor,” 211. After two months at Henry's court, Manuel left with gifts and more money, but no commitment to future military or financial aid, despite the statement in this letter.

⁴⁵ “An Image of Spring in a Royal Woven Tapestry” survives in Paris Gr. 3041, fols. 38r–v (PG 156: 577A–80B). See John Davis, “Manuel II Palaiologos' *A Depiction of Spring in a Dyed, Woven Hanging*” in *Porphyrogenita: Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides* (Aldershot, 2003), 411–21; and Glenn Peers, “Manuel II Palaiologos's Ekphrasis on a Tapestry in the Louvre: Word over Image,” *REB*, 61 (2003), 201–14. I have followed Davis's translation here. Similarly, John Eugenikos (1394–1454) wrote an *ekphrasis* on a Gothic tapestry, “A King and Queen in a Park,” found in Paris BN Gr. 2075, fols. 177ff.; Jean F. Boissonade (ed.), *Anecdota Nova* (Hildesheim, 1962), 340–6.

⁴⁶ Letter 41: Dennis, *The Letters*, 108.

dispersal of funds to the soldiers.⁴⁷ But the funds never materialized, and Boucicaut left for Genoa, having been named that city's governor.

By the spring of 1402, it had become increasingly clear that both vague and specific promises of support were empty. Manuel eventually wrote to John VII, his nephew, in Constantinople conveying news of his disappointment.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, in the emperor's absence, Bayezid's grip on the city remained steadfast. With no prospect of help in sight from the West, John VII agreed to surrender the imperial city to the Sultan to end the eight-year siege. Apparently at the very moment that the Byzantine embassy set out to deliver Bayezid the keys to the city, Tartar forces from the East intervened. At Ankara, Timur (Tamurlane), lord of Samarkand, defeated and captured Bayezid in July 1402. Constantinople was thus spared.

The coincidence of these events – the realization of Manuel's failure in Western Europe followed immediately by Bayezid's defeat at Ankara – is uncanny. The Battle of Ankara, "one of the most dramatic strokes of fate in late Byzantine history" according to one scholar, afforded Constantinople and what was left of the empire fifty more years of life.⁴⁹ The Byzantines described this momentous event as a miraculous act of the Virgin's grace, a miracle or *thauma* (τὸ θαῦμα) manifesting sacred intervention, not human agency or accident.⁵⁰ On the one-year anniversary of the Battle of Ankara, a church was dedicated to the Virgin in Constantinople and Demetrios Chrysoloras composed an oration commemorating the grace of

⁴⁷ Again, this is in Letter 41 (*ibid.*): "All that remains to be done is to assemble in the designated place the forces being readied for us by several sovereigns and there to distribute the pay to the soldiers, a very easy matter when the money is at hand, particularly when those about to receive their pay are so eager that they are willing to pay themselves, if only they should be provided with a just cause for taking up arms."

⁴⁸ In particular, he informed John VII of the king of England's inability to help and, in turn, John wrote directly to England: Barker, *Manuel II*, 213–14. Repeatedly Venice offered aid; only once did Genoa and France commit. But, again, nothing concrete materialized.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 215. Though presented as unexpected divine justice, rumors also spread that John VII had conspired with Timur. See *ibid.*, 504–9; and G. Dennis, "The Byzantine–Turkish Treaty of 1403," *OCP*, 33 (1967), 72–88. Bayezid died in March 1403. On the aftermath and the struggle for succession, see Dimitris J. Kastiris, "Religious Affiliations and Political Alliances in the Ottoman Succession Wars of 1402–1413," *Medieval Encounters*, 13 (2007), 222–42. In response to these events, Manuel composed a dialogue entitled "What Tamerlane might have said to Bayezid." On the Battle of Ankara, see Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 32–5.

⁵⁰ For the anonymous text dated to between 1405 and 1411, see Paul Gautier, "Un récit inédit du siège de Constantinople par les Turcs (1394–1402)," *REB*, 23 (1965), 100–17. According to the text, the greatness of the *thauma* outweighed the degree of humiliation and misery that the Roman Empire suffered during the time of Bayezid, and the extreme distress of the people of Constantinople and the heavy annual tribute paid to the Ottomans.

the Virgin (εἰς τὴν ὑπεραγίαν θεοτόκον εὐχαριστήριον).⁵¹ “Hail Queen,” he writes:

yesterday tears, today joy. Yesterday we were wasted away by famine, now we come to the table of plenty. Yesterday the city closed in affliction is today open in joy. Yesterday our spirit was angered by the fear of perpetual enslavement, now it rejoices in great freedom. Yesterday the entire city was shaken by the tempest, today she is installed in the port.⁵²

The passage is marked by a series of reversals of fate. Through the wondrous miracle (ξέγον θαῦμα), she who was dishonored is honored, she who was without glory is crowned, she who was previously humiliated is exalted, she who was poor becomes rich.⁵³ Bayezid is described as a great deluge – echoing Manuel’s exact characterization of the sultan at the Battle of Nikopolis – but one that has dissipated thanks to the *thauma* of the Virgin.⁵⁴

The Virgin’s *thauma* must have reached the emperor’s ears as he began his homeward trek, leaving Paris in November 1402, stopping first in Genoa, where he was housed and entertained by Boucicaut, the city’s newly appointed governor. The Venetian Senate had negotiated his means of transport from Venice back to Constantinople, via Modon in the Peloponnesos, where he had left his empress and children three years earlier. In June 1403 he finally arrived in Gallipoli, where he met John VII, and together they proceeded to Constantinople.⁵⁵

Hope of the Hopeless: material gifts and the immaterial

We have no textual account of the objects Manuel brought with him on this most urgent diplomatic mission, but we can be sure that relics played a large part in his diplomatic network, which went far beyond Paris and London. From his base in Paris, he sent appeals to other western courts, including those in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. He often sent relics as gifts along with his appeals – some of these were perhaps the same relics refused by Venice as sureties for the loan in December 1395. He brought with him the Tunic of Christ, or some large part thereof, and subdivided it into

⁵¹ Paul Gautier, “Action de grâces de Démétrius Chrysoloras à la Théotocos pour l’anniversaire de la bataille d’Ankara (28 juillet 1403),” *REB*, 19 (1961), 340–57.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 352 (no. 9, lines 65–70). ⁵³ *Ibid.* (no. 11, lines 80–2).

⁵⁴ Again, Letter 31 describes Bayezid as a κατακλυσμός, as he is described by Demetrios Chrysoloras (no. 18, line 138): *ibid.*, 356.

⁵⁵ On this transfer of power, see the discussion in the Introduction to Part II.

smaller portions to be extended as gifts. Textiles had long served as the Byzantine diplomatic gift par excellence – bolts of precious Byzantine silk were customarily used as diplomatic gifts for foreigners. On a practical level, cloth was easily transportable, its flexibility and lightness making it ideally suited to long-distance diplomacy.⁵⁶ By the time Manuel traveled to Europe, however, deluxe purple textiles were no longer the monopoly of Constantinople as in earlier times, when strict sumptuary laws regulated their circulation so as to raise their value when extended in diplomacy. Gone were the days in which a western ambassador such as Liudprand of Cremona would risk imprisonment in order to try to smuggle such luxury items out of the city.⁵⁷ By the late twelfth century, silks produced in Sicily, for example, rivaled Byzantine silks in quality. By the thirteenth century, when Michael VIII sent to Genoa the *peplos* embroidered with his own effigy set within the St Lawrence cycle, the prestige of Byzantine silk had diminished. By the fourteenth century, elites of Constantinople wore imported textiles more than locally produced garments.

Bearing in mind the past imperial association of Byzantine silks, Manuel's reliance on the relic of the Tunic of Christ on his western mission is significant. The use of sacred cloth as relic for a diplomatic gift echoes earlier protocol when Byzantium held much greater sway in the medieval Mediterranean, and at the same time, Manuel's textile relics signal a new era. The almost infinitely divisible Tunic of Christ enabled the emperor to dole out material sanctity and create networks of sacrality on an ad hoc basis. The emperor's matrix of Tunic recipients encompassed western authority figures, both sacred and secular. Portions of the Tunic were sent to both Pope Boniface IX and the anti-Pope Benedict XIII,⁵⁸ as well as to Queen Margaret of Denmark, Henry IV of England, and Martin I of Aragon.⁵⁹ Other non-textile Passion relics were also distributed. Pieces of the True Cross were extended to Charles III of Navarre and the Duc de Berry, and a piece of the Crown of Thorns was given to Giangaleazzo Visconti.⁶⁰ This brief sketch

⁵⁶ On the silk and diplomacy, see the discussion in the Introduction and in Chapter 1.

⁵⁷ Liudprand's second visit to Constantinople concluded in an episode of silk confiscation. Upon his departure from the city, he was accused of being in possession of illicit *κουλυόμενα* or, in Liudprand's words, articles the Byzantines "deemed forbidden to all nations except us Romans." To the envoy's consternation, "five very precious purple robes" were then confiscated. Liudprand of Cremona, *Complete Works*, 271–2.

⁵⁸ Apparently a piece of the bluish tunic of Christ delivered by Alexios Branas to Benedict XIII survives in the cathedral of Palma de Mallorca, along with the chrysobull issued by Manuel to authenticate the relic. See Holger Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West," *DOP*, 58 (2004), 311 n. 155.

⁵⁹ Mergiali-Sahas, "An Ultimate Wealth," 271–2; Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires," 310–11.

⁶⁰ For more on this last exchange with Visconti, see note 73 below.

of the networks of diplomatic relic exchange suggests that the emperor was hedging his bets by sending fragments of the same relic to both the Pope and the anti-Pope, and appealing to a wide array of distinct courts.

John Barker describes the gifting of relics as “ice-breakers” for Manuel’s diplomacy. In some instances they did break the ice for the emperor, assisting him with the opening of negotiations. Relics sent to Aragon, for example, initiated diplomatic engagement and prompted Manuel to open discussions with Castile and Navarre.⁶¹ Relics served as a kind of shorthand for shared piety. As a diplomatic strategy, the reliance on relics was intended to emphasize a devotional stance shared by western and Byzantine rulers, regardless of confessional lines and conflicts – Orthodox, Catholic, loyal to the Pope or not. The emperor sought to garner support for his faltering empire in the form of a crusade. As material signs of Christ’s presence, relics signal a unity of eastern and western powers in contrast to the Ottoman presence. With Byzantium as a mediator and a buffer between the European and Islamic lands, the relic was the ideal reminder of a shared sacred past and was sign of a common political enemy.⁶²

Furthermore, the relic was, in theory at least, beyond the market. The relic seemed like the optimal gift in that it was ideally not assigned monetary worth. Relics were not to be bought or sold, ransomed or pawned. Relics were distinguished by rank rather than price, as Patrick Geary has shown.⁶³ In the Palaiologan period, however, even such priceless symbols of sacred authority as the relic came under scrutiny. Like non-sacred Byzantine textiles, which no longer signified Byzantine prestige in the West, as noted above, the imperial association of relics had shifted by this time as

⁶¹ See Barker, *Manuel II*, 176–7, 183, 195–8.

⁶² Mergiali-Sahas, “An Ultimate Wealth,” 272, enumerates three reasons for the emperor’s use of relics as diplomatic gifts to western rulers: (1) traditional gift-giving etiquette for diplomatic engagement; (2) relics as symbols of political authority and the survival of Constantinople; and (3) the “inexplicable and invincible” western fascination with relics across strata of society. The second factor is the most relevant for the present discussion. It is argued here, in line with Klein’s argument in “Eastern Objects and Western Desires,” that the association of the eastern relic with imperial authority and by extension Constantinople was diminished in the later Byzantine period. Again, the relic as a material marker of shared Christian ritual and piety was particularly important given that the emperor was essentially raising support for his beleaguered empire in the form of a crusade against the Ottomans.

⁶³ See Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978); and Patrick Geary, “Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics” in Appadurai (ed.), *Social Life of Things*, 169–71. For Mergiali-Sahas, relics were the “most precious commodity of Christendom” that disguised the “humiliating reality” of the later Byzantine era. This conclusion, however, is not entirely convincing. Klein’s study, “Eastern Objects and Western Desires,” complicates the picture significantly, demonstrating that the relic concealed little about the contemporary situation. See note 64 below. Cf. Hetherington, “The Jewels from the Crown,” 167–8.

well. In earlier periods, Byzantium constituted the very guarantor of a relic's authenticity and the emperor's close association with the Passion relics in particular had long been acknowledged throughout the medieval Mediterranean. But, as Holger Klein has argued, the mystique of the Byzantine relic belongs to an earlier era.⁶⁴ One recipient of Manuel's relics, Martin I of Aragon, went so far as to question the authenticity of the fragments he was given.⁶⁵ In the past, a Constantinopolitan provenance served to guarantee a relic, but now such an origin rendered it suspect. The western market for eastern relics had been flooded by the Crusader conquest of Constantinople in 1204. Churches and monasteries of the eastern capital had been raided, with the spoils divided and shipped back to Europe.⁶⁶ At the time of Manuel's western travels, he was offering, for the most part, mere fragments of minor relics, while his royal French hosts had access to the major Passion relics that had once been in the custody of the emperor of Byzantium, where they had helped to define the very contours of the imperial office. In his "Comparison of Old and New Rome," Chrysoloras eloquently characterized the situation when he noted the loss of many of Constantinople's relics "having been gathered from everywhere through the zeal of our famous emperors . . . [and] having been distributed throughout the world like water from a common well."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ "As eastern relics and reliquaries failed to resist western desires to acquire and possess them," Klein ("Eastern Objects and Western Desires," 314) concludes, "they gradually lost their mystique and priceless value." See also Sophia Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics. Use and Misuse, of Sanctity and Authority," *JÖB*, 51 (2001), 41–60; Mergiali-Sahas, "An Ultimate Wealth," 264–75; Liz James, "Bearing Gifts from the East: Imperial Relic Hunters Abroad" in Eastmond (ed.), *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, 119–32. On Constantinople's collection of relics pre-1204, see Paul Magdalino, "L'église du Phare et les reliques de la Passion à Constantinople (VIIe/VIIIe–XIIIe siècles)" in J. Durand and B. Flusin (eds.), *Byzance et les reliques du Christ* (Paris, 2004), 15–30; John Wortley, "Relics and the Great Church," *BZ*, 99(2) (2006), 631–47.

⁶⁵ This is a letter dated to July 28, 1400. But later, in a second letter, Martin thanked the emperor for the relics. See Barker, *Manuel II*, 176; C. Marinesco, "Manuel II Paléologue et les rois d'Aragon: Commentaire sur quatre lettres inédites en Latin, expédiées par la chancellerie byzantine," *Bulletin de la Section Historique*, 11 (1924), 192–206; and C. Marinesco, "De nouveau sur les relations de Manuel Paléologue (1391–1425) avec l'Espagne" in *Atti dello VIII Congresso Internazionale di studi Bizantini, I (Studi bizantini e neoellenici 7)* (Rome, 1953), 420–36; and Sebastián C. Estopañan, *Bizancio y España. La unión, Manuel II. Paleólogo y sus recuerdos en España* (Barcelona, 1952), 102–5.

⁶⁶ Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires," 283–314, especially 301–12, has explored the movement of relics from Byzantium to the West via gifting, theft, and commercial transaction. See also Jannic Durand, "La translation des reliques impériales de Constantinople à Paris," and "Les reliques et reliquaires byzantins acquis par saint Louis" in Jannic Durand and Marie-Pierre Laffitte (eds.), *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle* (Paris, 2001), 37–41 and 52–4.

⁶⁷ Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism*, 213. Chrysoloras emphasizes that although many relics no longer remain in Constantinople, some still do.

While Manuel's relic diplomacy is well documented, it is less clear what portable Byzantine items other than relics were brought to the West to be offered as gifts during the emperor's western sojourn. Without an imperial diplomatic packing list for the Palaiologan period, as we have for the tenth century,⁶⁸ it is difficult to ascertain precisely what was deemed an appropriate gift to kindle foreign *philia*. And yet a careful archaeology of one icon and its frame in the Treasury of Freising Cathedral in Germany, now in the Diözesanmuseum, has enabled scholars, most recently Maria Vassilaki, to trace its arrival in Europe to Manuel's visit.⁶⁹ A brief summary of the complicated chronology of the piece gives us a clearer, though still partial, picture of gift-giving strategies from the supplicant eastern emperor in western lands.

The Freising "Lukasbild," as it is presently known, consists of a relatively small painted icon of the Virgin encased within silver repoussé revetment surrounded in turn by a frame of ten enamel medallions alternating with rectangular inscribed plaques (Figure 4.1). The inscription in the enamel plaques of the frame names the original patron of the icon as Manuel Dishypatos, who served as Metropolitan of Thessaloniki from 1258 to 1261. The original painted icon, which was painted over later, is probably contemporary, while the frame should be situated in mid-thirteenth century Thessaloniki, sometime before 1258 as the patron is identified as priest (*kanstrisios* and deacon) and not metropolitan, an office he assumed in that year.⁷⁰ Evidence that the icon was regifted by Emperor Manuel II during his European sojourn more than a century later is given by a seventeenth-century inscription engraved above the altarpiece in Freising Cathedral. According to this Latin inscription, the "Emperor of the East" gave the icon to Giangaleazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan (1385–95).⁷¹ While the eastern emperor

⁶⁸ See the discussion in the Introduction.

⁶⁹ Maria Vassilaki, "Praying for the Salvation of the Empire?" in Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God*, 263–74, with full bibliography at n. 1, to which should be added Alice-Mary Talbot, "Epigrams in Context: Metrical Inscriptions on Art and Architecture of the Palaiologan Era," *DOP*, 53 (1999), 75–90, especially 82–8; and Bauer, "Byzantinische Geschenkdiplomatie," 40–1. What follows is based primarily on Vassilaki's study.

⁷⁰ Vassilaki, "Praying for the Salvation," 268. See Cutler, "Manuel Dishypatos" in the *ODB*; and *PLP*, no. 5544. Note that Manuel Dishypatos was credited with prophesying that Manuel Palaiologos would one day rule according to Pachymeres (I, 47.8–51.2), cited in Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 374 n. 11.

⁷¹ According to Vassilaki, "Praying for the Salvation," 266, this inscription reads: "The icon of the Virgin of Virgins, painted by St. Luke, was received from the Emperor of the East by Giangaleazzo Duke of the Insubres, and from him by the Earl (*comes*) of Kent in England, and from her [*sic*] by Brunoro della Scala, who sent it as a gift to his brother Nicodemo, the bishop of Freising, on 23 September 1440. From henceforth it is an object of veneration, and not a



Figure 4.1 Freising icon, Freising Cathedral

in question is not named explicitly, the evidence for the association with Manuel II is convincing. En route to Paris in 1399, Manuel passed through Milan, where he was honored by the duke's hospitality. Visconti pledged his support of Manuel's mission, even promising to go to Constantinople in person should support from other European rulers materialize, and he

gift: nor would others have given it, if they had been sufficiently knowledgeable. Veit Adam, the Bishop of the church of Freising, placed the Mother of God on behalf of the Mother of God, 1629.”

also showered the emperor's entourage with "generous gifts, money, horses, guards, and guides for his journey to France."⁷² The emperor too extended eastern gifts to his host. In addition to one of the thorns from the Crown of Thorns,⁷³ it seems likely that the Freising icon was offered as a gift at this moment as well.⁷⁴

The relationship between the original context and function of the icon and the diplomatic purpose to which it was later put by the emperor merits further attention. The poetic epigram on the icon makes clear that Manuel Dishypatos commissioned the icon as a votive offering in the mid-thirteenth century:

The yearning of my soul, and silver, and thirdly gold
Are [here] offered to you, the pure Virgin.
However, silver and gold by nature
Could be stained since they are of perishable material,
Whereas the yearning of an immortal soul
Could not be stained nor come to an end.
For even if this body should dissolve in Hades,
It continues to entreat you for the mercy of its soul.
These words are addressed to you
By Manuel Dishypatos, kanstrisios and deacon.
Receive them compassionately, O Virgin,
And grant in return that through your entreaties
I may traverse this ephemeral life without sorrow,
Until you show the end of the day and light.⁷⁵

This epigram casts the petition to the Virgin in the familiar sacred economy of gift-giving, where material luxury is offered as a manifestation of immaterial desire in exchange for the generosity of the sacred one being petitioned. Unlike the perishable nature of silver and gold, the prayer emphasizes, the

⁷² Barker, *Manuel II*, 172, with further references at n. 88.

⁷³ Vassilaki, "Praying for the Salvation," 267 cites the source: "Two thorns owned by the Cathedral of Pavia, where they entered September 2, 1499, one came from Philip of Valois, who had separated from the crown of Paris . . . The other had been given to the Duke Visconti, in 1400, by Manuel, during his stay in Pavia."

⁷⁴ Vassilaki has most forcefully argued for the association of the icon as a gift from Manuel II to Giangaleazzo. The confluence of inscription and historic circumstances paired with the tenor of the piece are convincing. These two pieces of textual evidence – again on the icon itself and on the altarpiece of the cathedral in which it was placed – specify two moments in the icon's history: its original patronage in Thessaloniki in the later thirteenth century and its transfer to Italy at the very end of the fourteenth century. But Vassilaki's investigative work allows us to flesh out the picture ever further and to consider what the gift of this icon might have signified in Manuel II's urgent diplomatic agenda.

⁷⁵ Talbot, "Epigrams in Context," 82; Vassilaki, "Praying for the Salvation," 264–5.

patron's yearning is eternal; yearning is placed above silver and gold. Manuel Dishypatos offers the icon in the hopes that the Virgin will reciprocate with kindness. Such a pattern is far from unique.⁷⁶

Despite its original context of sacred intercession, the prayer inscribed on the Freising icon also accords well with the tenor of Manuel's diplomatic mission to Europe more than a century later. Manuel's position was one of a suppliant much like the eponymous first patron of the icon, Manuel Dishypatos, with the obvious distinction that the former supplicated the Virgin and the emperor supplicated western terrestrial powers. The supplicatory mood of the epigram is underscored by the icon's silver revetment, which includes the inscription "Hope of the Hopeless" (Ἡ Ἐλπὶς τῶν Ἀνελπισμένων).⁷⁷ While extremely rare, Vassilaki notes that this epithet for the Virgin does appear in a fourteenth-century icon in the church of the Acheiropoietos in Thessaloniki.⁷⁸ It was in the late fourteenth century that the icon took its present form, when the revetment was added and the icon was over-painted. Presumably Manuel Palaiologos commissioned the revetment with the epithet for the thirteenth-century icon, which came into his possession during one of his two residencies in Thessaloniki (as despot from 1369 to 1374 and as co-emperor from 1382 to 1387). During both these periods, he was charged with confiscating ecclesiastical property and selling church treasures in order to raise funds for his father's policies and for the city's defense against Ottoman forces. It is easy to see why this particular icon was then selected in time of need to travel with him to the West. The icon is ideally suited for the emperor's western diplomacy because of its first-person prayer in the epigram – significantly, the emperor shares the same name as the initial petitioner – and its rare but emotional epithet that signals urgency. The "Hope of the Hopeless" appellation, in particular, Vassilaki notes, "is the perfect expression of the psychological climate of the endangered capital, which also dictated the emperor's political initiatives."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ See Nunn, "The Encheiron as Adjunct," 73–102. For middle Byzantine epigrams on icons, see Titos Papamastorakis, "The Display of Accumulated Wealth in Luxury Icons: Gift-Giving from the Byzantine Aristocracy to God in the Twelfth Century" in Vassilaki (ed.), *Βυζαντινές Εικόνες: Τέχνη, τεχνική και τεχνολογία*, 35–47; and Bissera V. Pentcheva, "Epigrams on Icons" in Liz James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture* (Cambridge, 2007), 120–38. For Palaiologan epigrams and artworks, see Talbot, "Epigrams in Context," 75–90. Ivan Drpić is presently concluding a thorough analytic study of later Byzantine epigrams, and his forthcoming article, "The Patron's 'I,'" includes discussion of the epigram on the Freising icon.

⁷⁷ On the left of the Virgin is the abbreviation Μή(τη)ρ Θ(εο)ῦ and on the right Ἡ Ἐλπὶς τῶν Ἀνελπισμένων.

⁷⁸ Vassilaki, "Praying for the Salvation," 269.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 270. Furthermore, it "describes the psychological climate in which he undertook the journey" (266).

The Freising icon, as a gift from Manuel II, invokes the close association of the image of the Virgin, the imperial city, and the emperor. These same associations have been discussed within the context of the early Palaiologan era in previous chapters. The icon of the Virgin led Michael VIII's *adventus* into Constantinople in 1261 on her feast day, and the first gold coinage issued after the return of Byzantine rule to the city paired the Virgin's effigy within the walls of the city with a scene of symbolic imperial investiture. Unlike the early Palaiologan celebration of the return of the Virgin's favor to the city, Manuel Palaiologos offered the icon of the Virgin at a moment of more pronounced uncertainty for the Virgin's city. Recall that at the end of the eight-year blockade of the city, Demetrios Chrysoloras composed verses of praise and thanksgiving to the Virgin – as did the emperor himself.⁸⁰ The Ottoman siege prompted the emperor to leave Constantinople and travel in person to the West in search of financial and military assistance. Along with the emperor, the icon of the Virgin, presumably confiscated by Manuel in Thessaloniki and brought to Constantinople, left the imperial city with which she bore a special relationship and was given to western representatives who held the power to save her city. The emperor was, in essence, giving the icon's recipient the visual surrogate of the sacred protectress of the imperial city, putting her powerful and efficacious effigy into their hands.

Despite Manuel's relic and icon diplomacy, he returned to Constantinople empty handed. His personal visit, letters, sacred objects, and icon did not secure the financial assistance he set out to obtain. Words of encouragement, even promises, did not materialize into troops or funds. But he had not exhausted all his options. While supplicated western recipients may have even questioned the authenticity of the imperial relics doled out along his sojourn, there was still another potentially valuable resource: Byzantine books. Upon the emperor's return to Constantinople, which remained in Byzantine hands due to providential events entirely outside his control, the *thauma* of the Theotokos, the emperor continued to send letters of appeal to the West, often with relics. He also sent to Paris a luxurious Greek book, a copy of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite, which still survives in the Louvre. This gift comprises one part of a larger narrative of generosity, diplomacy, aesthetics, and iconography that looks

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 270. Manuel II wrote a “paracletic canon to the holiest Mother of God for the present situation” (citing Émile Legrand, *Lettres de l'empereur Manuel Paléologue publiées d'après trois manuscrits* (Amsterdam, 1962), 94–102). As noted above, Gautier published the two texts, the anonymous description of the siege and Demetrios Chrysoloras's oration on the anniversary of the siege of Ankara.

both backwards toward a genealogy of Byzantine–French gifts and forwards toward an uncertain future.

Imperial generosity and the *Corpus Dionysiaceum*

Manuel’s gift of the deluxe copy of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite was hand-delivered to France by Manuel Chrysoloras, a key figure in the cultivation of Greek studies in Europe in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The circumstances of the arrival of the codex, which is now preserved in the Louvre (Département des Objets d’art, MR 416),⁸¹ are elaborated by a notation in Chrysoloras’s own hand on folio 237v:

This book was sent by the most exalted Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans, lord Manuel Palaiologos, to the Monastery of Saint Dionysios in Paris in Phrancia or Galatia, from Constantinople through me, Manuel Chrysoloras, who has been sent as ambassador by the said Basileus, in the year from the Creation of the Universe, 6916, and from the Incarnation of the Lord, 1408; the said Basileus came formerly to Paris four years before.⁸²

Here the courier is identified as the emperor’s ambassador, *presbus* (πρέσβυς), a term from antiquity but one commonly used in later Byzantine narrative sources to specify diplomatic agents.⁸³ Scholars have noted that Manuel II’s diplomatic corps was built on bonds of kinship and friendship.⁸⁴ Chrysoloras was indeed among the emperor’s closest friends and advisors, but he was also an influential teacher of Greek and he served in an official capacity as the ambassador or envoy. The distinction among these

⁸¹ This manuscript has also been cited as Louvre, Département des Objets d’art, Ivoires A53 and A100, owing to discrepancies in early Louvre inventories.

⁸² Barker, *Manuel II*, 264, 545 (and fig. 20): Τὸ παρὸν βιβλίον ἀπεστάλη παρὰ τοῦ ὑψηλοτάτου βασιλέως καὶ / αὐτοκράτορος Ῥωμαίων κυροῦ Μανουῆλ τοῦ Παλαιολόγου εἰς τὸ μ/ναστήριον τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐν Παρυσίῳ τῆς Φραγγίας ἢ Γαλατίας / ἀπὸ τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως δι’ ἐμοῦ Μανουῆλ τοῦ Χρυσολωρᾶ πεμ/φθέντος πρέσβεως παρὰ τοῦ εἰρημένου βασιλέως, ἔτει ἀπὸ κτίσεως / κόσμου, ἑξακισχίλιοστῷ ἑννεακοσιοστῷ ἑξκαιδεκάτῳ· ἀπὸ σαρκώσεως / δὲ τοῦ Κυρίου χιλιοστῷ τετρακοσιοστῷ ὀγδόῳ· / ὅστις εἰρημένος βασιλεὺς ἦλθε πρότερον εἰς τὸ Παρύσιον πρὸ ἐτῶν τεσσάρων. Of course, as scholars acknowledge, the emperor had in actuality left Paris six years before, not four as the inscription states.

⁸³ Mergiali-Sahas, “A Byzantine Ambassador,” 598.

⁸⁴ Rather than constituting a self-sufficient diplomatic corps, these “men of confidence,” as characterized by Oikonomides, were selected on the basis of their “personal ties with the ruler himself,” according to Barker, “Emperors, Embassies, and Scholars,” 158. Of the thirty documented missions to the West under Manuel II, Mergiali-Sahas (“A Byzantine Ambassador,” 598) calculates, twenty-one ambassadors are recorded, and of these, seven ambassadors were related to the emperor. The records generally specify the name and relationship to the emperor without reference to exact office or station.

different guises does not always remain clear and their relation merits further comment.

Manuel Chrysoloras was a student of Demetrios Kydones, who was Manuel Palaiologos's teacher, friend, and recipient of many of the emperor's letters, including the one with which this chapter began.⁸⁵ Kydones and Chrysoloras were together in Venice in the mid-1390s, having been sought out by a number of "enthusiastic Florentines" to teach Greek. Later, Chrysoloras received a formal invitation from the Florentine Republic to provide instruction in Greek language and literature.⁸⁶ Chrysoloras's teaching agenda in Italy frames the emperor's western diplomatic mission. Recall that en route to Paris in 1399/1400, the emperor met Chrysoloras in Milan at the court of Giangaleazzo Visconti, where he presented Visconti with the Hope of the Hopeless icon of the Virgin and a piece of the Crown of Thorns. After the emperor moved on to Paris and London, Chrysoloras remained to teach Greek and collect funds for the emperor, his scholarly endeavors thus intersecting with official diplomatic activity.⁸⁷ Two of the emperor's surviving letters written in Paris are addressed to Chrysoloras and in them, as discussed above, the emperor articulates his hope and anxiety about his prospects of garnering support. At the close of his extended European sojourn, the two were reunited for the emperor's journey homeward.

In the years following their return to the imperial capital, Chrysoloras continued to act as the emperor's diplomatic agent. Because of his connections to humanist circles in Italy, it was Chrysoloras whom Manuel entrusted with keeping the Byzantine cause alive in the West. While dealing with the struggle for succession among Bayezid's sons, Manuel incessantly directed diplomatic appeals to different courts in Spain, England, France, and Italy; Chrysoloras played an integral role in these endeavors.⁸⁸ After returning to Constantinople with the emperor, Chrysoloras traveled twice to Italy in 1404 and again in 1405–6. Then in 1407 Chrysoloras embarked upon his final mission, a lengthy three-year peripatetic journey with visits to Venice, Genoa, Paris, London, Salisbury, and Barcelona. During this time,

⁸⁵ And he also accompanied Manuel's father, John V, to Rome, as noted in the Introduction to Part II.

⁸⁶ Teacher and student traveled together in 1395 and 1396–7. See Barker, "Emperors, Embassies, and Scholars," 162–6. Chrysoloras's "trailblazing" educational program began in February 1397.

⁸⁷ Mergiali-Sahas, "A Byzantine Ambassador," 601, describes him both as a scholar-ambassador and as the "forerunner of a resident ambassador" at this point.

⁸⁸ Barker, *Manuel II*, 257, notes that however incomplete our knowledge of the exact diplomatic missions during the decade after Manuel's return may be, it is clear that "his agents continued the quest for aid without cessation."

he renewed the contacts made during his earlier mission and cultivated friendships through gifts of relics.⁸⁹ But for France, a relic would not do. After all, Louis IX of France (1226–70) had acquired the Crown of Thorns and other major relics of the Passion, and had built the Sainte-Chapelle as a monumental jewel-like reliquary to house them in the mid-thirteenth century.⁹⁰ Instead, Manuel delivered the deluxe copy of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite.

The decision to send this particular book as a diplomatic gift was strategically significant, as Manuel's gift was essentially a sequel to an earlier Byzantine imperial gift of the same text to the same abbey. During the emperor's stay in Paris in 1400, he visited the royal abbey, where he even attended mass with King Charles.⁹¹ There he could have seen the deluxe ninth-century copy of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* that had been offered to the Abbey of Saint-Denis by the Byzantine Emperor Michael II (r. 820–9).⁹² The gift of the earlier codex, now preserved as Paris BN Ms. Gr. 437, has been described by Michael McCormick as "one of the most pregnant instances of cross-cultural transfer in the Middle Ages."⁹³ Although the pages of the ninth-century imperial gift contain no illustration or ornament, the book

⁸⁹ See discussion in Barker, "Emperors, Embassies, and Scholars," 165–6.

⁹⁰ As Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires," 312, astutely points out. On Louis and the Crown of Thorns, see Klein, 307–8; Jannic Durand, "La translation des reliques impériales de Constantinople à Paris" and "Les reliques et reliquaires byzantins acquis par saint Louis" in Durand and Laffitte (eds.), *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle*, 37–41 and 52–54; and Claudine Billot, "Des Reliques de la passion dans le royaume de France" in Durand and Flusin (eds.), *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, 239–48.

⁹¹ This was on his second visit to Paris after his trip to London. See Barker, *Manuel II*, 181–3; Schlumberger, "Un Empereur," 124–5; and Berger de Xivrey, "Mémoire," 110–11.

⁹² It is hard to imagine that the Byzantine emperor would not have been given a tour of the abbey's library and shown the deluxe ninth-century copy, or at the very least been made aware of its presence. The codex remained in the abbey library until the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.

⁹³ Michael McCormick, "Byzantium's Role in the Formation of Early Medieval Civilization: Approaches and Problems," *Illinois Classical Studies*, 12(2) (1987), 218. On this ninth-century book, see *Byzance et la France médiévale* (Paris, 1958), 3–4 (cat. no. 6); and *Byzance, L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris, 1992), 188 (cat. no. 126). On the context of the book's exchange, see Brubaker, "The Elephant and the Ark," 182–3; Lowden, "The Luxury Book," 250–1; G. Théry, *Études Dionysiennes I* (Paris, 1932); Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, "La Légende parisienne de S. Denys l'Aréopagite. Sa genèse et son premier témoin," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 69 (1951), 217–37 [repr. *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca I* (Rome, 1970)]; H. Omont, "Manuscrit des oeuvres de S. Denys l'Aréopagite envoyé de Constantinople à Louis le Débonnaire en 827," *REG*, 17 (1904), 230–6; Andrew Louth, "St Denys the Areopagite and the Iconoclast Controversy" in Ysabel de Andia (ed.), *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident* (Paris, 1997), 335. The afterlife of this volume in comparison to the Palaiologan copy is treated in Cecily J. Hilsdale, "The Agency of the Object: The Translation and *Translatio* of Two Byzantine Books in France" (essay under review).

is a large sumptuous codex written entirely in a clear uncial script. The fact that very few could read Greek does not diminish the significance of its arrival. Solemnly carried in procession from Louis's palace at Compiègne to the Abbey of Saint-Denis on the vigil of the saint's feast, the book was said to perform no less than nineteen miraculous cures on the very night of its transfer. In other words, as an object, it carried social and spiritual weight regardless of its literal legibility.⁹⁴

Interest in the content of the book was quick to follow the ninth-century Byzantine gift, and the dissemination of Dionysian thought pervaded intellectual circles in Western Europe.⁹⁵ Despite its lack of imagery, the manuscript sent by Michael II lies at the core of the development of

⁹⁴ McCormick, "Byzantium's Role," too has discussed the different valences of the book's reception, first as a relic and then as a devotional work (i.e., involving the content). In terms of legibility, Lowden ultimately suggests that books did not make good diplomatic gifts because of the linguistic issues. But see Paul Magdalino's important recent essay, "Évaluation de dons et donation de livres dans la diplomatie byzantine" in Michael Grünbart (ed.), *Geschenke erhalten die Freundschaft: Gabentausch und Netzwerkpflege im europäischen Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2001), 103–16. Note that Magdalino also treats the reception of the ninth-century gift in great detail. For Greek learning in the West at this time, see W. Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Later Middle Ages: From Jerome to Nicholas of Cusa*, revised and expanded edn., trans. J. C. Frakes (Washington DC, 1988), 126–56, especially 117–25; and L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1974), especially 105–7.

⁹⁵ As Brubaker, "The Elephant and the Ark," 183, puts it, the book's arrival "set off a chain of reactions." The text was translated first by Hilduin himself around 838 upon the instruction of Louis the Pious and a second time by John Scotus Eriugena for Charles the Bald (c. 860). It was Eriugena's translation, a significant improvement over the first, that launched the diffusion of the Dionysian "influence." See McCormick, "Byzantium's Role," 218; Michael McCormick, "Diplomacy and the Carolingian Encounter with Byzantium Down to the Accession of Charles the Bald" in B. McGinn and W. Otten (eds.), *Eriugena: East and West* (Notre Dame, 1994), 15–48 (as well as the introduction to this volume by McGinn); and Édouard Jeaneau, "Jean Scot Érigène et le grec," *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, 41 (1979), 5–50 [repr. Édouard Jeaneau, *Études érigéniennes* (Paris, 1987), 85–132]. Eriugena's translation of Michael II's Byzantine gift bears particular implications for art and aesthetic theory at the Carolingian court and beyond. A number of significant Carolingian artistic commissions have been interpreted through the lens of the Pseudo-Areopagite and his first interpreter and translator, Eriugena, in particular, the Codex Aureus of St Emmeram in Munich and the Lindau Gospels in the Morgan Library, both part of the lavish patronage of Charles the Bald's court. The manuscript and the cover of the Codex Aureus have been read in light of Eriugena's numerology. See Paul Edward Dutton and Édouard Jeaneau, "The Verses of the 'Codex Aureus' of Saint-Emmeram," *Studi medievali*, 3(24) (1983), 75–120 [repr. Jeaneau, *Études érigéniennes*, 543–638]. The unusual crucifixion iconography of the upper cover of the Lindau Gospels has been explained both by the translated Pseudo-Areopagite's text and by Eriugena's *Periphyseon*. Jeanne-Marie Musto, "John Scottus Eriugena and the Upper Cover of the Lindau Gospels," *Gesta*, 40(1) (2001), 1–18, has argued that the design of the Lindau cover reconfigured previous Carolingian iconographic traditions to provide "a visual analogue to Eriugena's ecumenical vision," with its powerful metaphors for the return of creation to Christ and its emphasis on transcendent vision. Other Carolingian works have been read through the lens of

aesthetic theory in the West, far beyond the Carolingian court. The ninth-century book is generally credited with the genesis of Dionysian “influence” in Western Europe: its translation was interpreted and amended, circulated widely, and read by luminaries at the University of Paris and elsewhere.⁹⁶ Dionysian theories of emanations underlie the notion of art as uplifting and contemplative, art as *anagoge*: “it is by way of the perceptible images that we are uplifted as far as we can be to the contemplation of what is divine.”⁹⁷ This understanding of material beauty as vehicle of spiritual ascent informs such prominent figures as Suger, Abbot of Saint-Denis from 1122 to 1151. From Pseudo-Dionysios’s *Celestial Hierarchy* in particular, Suger was inspired to consider the anagogical qualities of glass and stone so that this world’s beauty can transport the pious contemplator to a higher realm.⁹⁸

While Michael II’s ninth-century copy of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* occupies a privileged position in the development of western aesthetic theory, this Byzantine gift was embedded within a larger trajectory of aesthetics and iconography that traveled both west and east. The arrival in France of the ninth-century Greek copy of the works of Pseudo-Dionysios from Constantinople immediately inspired the composition of a new *passio* of the saint written in Latin.⁹⁹ This new Latin *passio* was then translated into

Pseudo-Dionysios; see, for example, Archer St Clair, “A New Moses: Typological Iconography in the Moutier-Grandval Bible Illustrations of Exodus,” *Gesta*, 26(1) (1987), 19–28.

⁹⁶ See Hyacinthe François Dondaine, *Le Corpus dionysien de l’université de Paris au XIIIe siècle* (Rome, 1953); L. M. Harrington (ed. and trans.), *A Thirteenth-Century Textbook of the Mystical Theology at the University of Paris* (Leuven, 2004); and many of the essays in de Andia (ed.), *Denys l’Aréopagite*.

⁹⁷ *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, with foreword, notes, and translation collaboration with Paul Rorem (New York, 1987), 197 [=PG 3, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 337B].

⁹⁸ See E. Panofsky (ed. and trans.), *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*, 2nd edn. (Princeton, 1979 [1946]). In *De administratione*, for example, Suger writes of precious adornment of the cross of St Eiegus (Eloy) and the so-called “crista” of Charlemagne: “the loveliness of the many-colored gems has called me away from external cares, and worthy meditation has induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial . . . I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.” In the very next sentence, Suger compares the treasures of his church to those of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Suger’s meditation on bronze reliefs of the central west portal’s doors is another celebrated instance of Dionysian imagery. For Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 23, Suger’s writing “amount[s] to a condensed statement of the whole theory of ‘anagogical’ illumination.” See responses by G. A. Zinn, Jr., “Suger, Theology, and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition” in P. L. Gerson (ed.), *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis. A Symposium* (New York, 1986), 33–40; and Peter Kidson, “Panofsky, Suger, and St. Denis,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 50 (1987), 1–17.

⁹⁹ On the relation of the new *passio* in Latin (the *Post beatam et gloriosam*, BHL 2178) to the much older passion (the *Gloriosae*, BHL 2171), see Louth, “St Denys,” 336; Raymond-Joseph

Greek sometime before 833 and was sent to Constantinople as a return gift that responded directly to the initial imperial offering.¹⁰⁰ The most significant difference between the new *passio* written after the receipt of the Byzantine book and the older model is the explicit identification of the Areopagite with the martyr of Paris. The patron saint of the abbey who had converted Gaul was thus given an apostolic pedigree. This synthesis of eastern and western hagiographic traditions ultimately brought together three *Dionysii*: the first-century bishop of Athens converted by St Paul on the Areopagus according to Acts 17:34, the third-century missionary to Gaul and first bishop of Paris,¹⁰¹ and the fifth-century anonymous author of the four theological treatises and ten letters known collectively as the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.¹⁰²

In tandem with this new *passio*, an iconographic innovation emerged in the east. Traditionally, the martyrdom of Dionysios the Areopagite is represented in Byzantine art as a fairly conventional scene of decapitation. But following the new *passio* (the *post beatum*), as Christopher Walter argues, we encounter a visual program in the east of St Dionysios *kephalophoros* where the saint bears his own decapitated head in his hands. The legend of the saint carrying his severed head is decidedly western in origin – again, it was the *post beatum* that first associated the Areopagite with St Denis of Gaul and that first related the head-bearing miracle. Thus, the iconographic development of St Dionysios *kephalophoros* can be seen as one part of a larger artistic and hagiographic exchange. This exchange, it is important to note, should not be understood as one of simple “influence.”¹⁰³ While the *kephalophoros* legend may be western in origin, the iconography itself is decidedly an eastern invention.¹⁰⁴ Byzantine *kephalophoros* imagery

Loenertz, “Le panégyrique de S. Denys l’Aréopagite par S. Michel le Syncelle,” *Analecta Bollandiana*, 68 (1950), 94–107 [= *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca* I, 149–62]; and Loenertz, “La légende parisienne de S. Denys l’Aréopagite.” It has recently been argued that the *Post beatam* was written a generation earlier; see the discussion in Édouard Jeuneau, “L’Abbaye de Saint-Denis introductrice de Denys en Occident” in de Andia (ed.), *Denys l’Aréopagite*, 363–4.

¹⁰⁰ The Greek translation of the Latin legend: PG 4: 669–84. This then served as the source for the Greek vita by Michael Synkellos, on which see Loenertz, “Le panégyrique,” 94–107.

¹⁰¹ This St Denis, after being decapitated for his faith, picked up his head and walked with it to his burial spot, commemorated first by tomb, then church, then by royal abbey. The history of the identification of the author is succinctly outlined by Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (Oxford, 1993), 15–18. See also Louth, “St. Denys,” 336; and Loenertz, *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca*, 171.

¹⁰² The *Corpus Dionysiacum* consists of *The Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, as well as the *Letters*.

¹⁰³ See McCormick, “Byzantium’s Role,” 218, on the inadequacy of the term for this context.

¹⁰⁴ Walter is explicit about this point. He argues that although it was originally a western hagiographic narrative, the *céphalophorie* was reinterpreted in Byzantine iconography to

emphasizes the head as a trophy or prized relic. Folio 82 of the illustrated *Synaxarion* of Basil II illustrates this point well (Figure 4.2). At the very center of the composition, the severed head is held in the hands of the martyr in a manner reminiscent of a sacred offering; his dark cloak covers his hands as an indication of its sanctity.¹⁰⁵

The Byzantine emperor's ninth-century gift of a book thus generated a plethora of counter-gifts. On a conceptual level, it provided the raw material for translation and philosophical inquiry that would profoundly shape aesthetic theory in the West. At the same time, it provoked the genesis of a new narrative: the writing and giving of a new *passio* and the development of a new iconography.¹⁰⁶

With this genealogy in mind, we can now return to the Palaiologan copy of the *Corpus Dionysiaticum* extended as a gift to the same abbey centuries later. Elegantly written in a single column of minuscule framed by scholia, the script is punctuated frequently by enlarged letters in gold and other ornament, including four headpieces marking book divisions.¹⁰⁷ The most

emphasize the head as a trophy "and in the case of a martyr, a prized relic." See C. Walter, "Three Notes on the Iconography of Dionysius the Areopagite," *REB*, 48 (1990), 255–74, especially 268–72.

¹⁰⁵ See Evans and Wixom (eds.), *Glory of Byzantium*, 100–1 (cat. no. 55) with bibliography. In a more simplified version of this scene on an icon at St Catherine's monastery, Mount Sinai, the martyr similarly presents his head as an offering, although unlike the *synaxarion* image, dressed in Episcopal garb, the omophorion, and without an intermediary cloth covering his hands. See Walter, "Three Notes," 272. On the omophorion, see C. Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London, 1982), 9–13. The representation of St Dionysios holding his fully severed head on this page stands in sharp contrast to other martyrs being beheaded, which occur with great frequency in the *synaxarion*. In general, such martyrdoms are depicted either right before the beheading, emphasizing the pregnant moment of anticipation, or immediately afterwards with the decapitated head on the ground (this later instance occurs on this page for his companions in the lower-left corner). The representation of St Dionysios stands out as distinct from these more typical formulae.

¹⁰⁶ It is important to point out that these developments are distinct from the original Byzantine intention of the gift of the book. McCormick, "Byzantium's Role," 219, points out that Hilduin's zealotry in having the book translated and having the new *passio* written "was first and foremost a weapon in the struggle to enhance the prestige and power of his own house via an apostolic connection," having perhaps nothing at all to do with Byzantium. In other words, Michael II could not foresee his gift causing these particular results.

¹⁰⁷ It is slightly larger than the previous edition. The size difference is just over two centimeters, with the Louvre codex measuring 27.3 × 20 cm and the earlier BN codex measuring 25 × 17.5 cm. Headpieces on ff. 7r, 55v, 147r and 205r. Catalog entries of the codex include: Musée du Louvre, *Byzance: L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris, 1992), 463–4 (cat. no. 353); Musée du Louvre, *Le trésor de Saint-Denis* (Paris, 1991), 276–7 (cat. no. 60); and Bibliothèque Nationale, *Byzance et la France médiévale* (Paris, 1958), 32–3 (cat. no. 51). The scholia are by both John of Scythopolis and Maximos the Confessor; on the former, see P. Rorem and J. C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford, 1998).



Figure 4.2 St Dionysios in the *Synaxarion* of Basil II, Vatican Library, Vat. Gr. 1613, fol. 82

significant departure from the ninth-century book, however, is the addition of two miniatures of the highest quality at the beginning of the codex: a portrait of the author on folio 1r (Figure 4.3) followed by the imperial family on folio 2r (Figure 4.4), to which we will turn shortly.



Figure 4.3 Author portrait, works of Dionysios the Areopagite, Louvre, Paris, MR 416 fol. 1r

While Chrysoloras's colophon secures the *terminus ante quem* for the book as a whole, the earlier chronology of the codex requires elaboration. On the basis of the inscribed names and titles of the figures represented on folio 2r, the imperial family portrait must have been executed at some point between June 1403, when the imperial family was reunited and returned to Constantinople, and February 1405, when the emperor's fourth son,



Figure 4.4 Palaiologan family portrait, works of Dionysios the Areopagite, Louvre, Paris, MR 416 fol. 2r

Constantine, who is not included in the portrait, was born.¹⁰⁸ Yet paleographic analysis suggests that the manuscript's text was written in the first

¹⁰⁸ See P. Schreiner, "Chronologische Untersuchungen zur Familie Kaiser Manuels II.," *BZ*, 63(2) (1970), 286–7; Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 143; Klaus Wessel, "Manuel II. Palaiologos und seine Familie: Zur Miniature des Cod. Ivoires A 53 des Louvre" in Rüdiger Becksmann (ed.), *Beiträge zur Kunst des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Hans Wentzel* (Berlin, 1975), 219–29; and Oikonomides, "John VII Palaeologus," 333.

third of the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁹ The emperor's gift, then, was recycled. Like the Freising icon, where an early Palaiologan icon was revetted in the later fourteenth century and then subsequently put to use in the emperor's western diplomacy, the production of the codex involved both reuse and originality.

The chronology of the book can be summarized as follows. In the first third of the fourteenth century, the text was copied but presumably not illuminated. Following the emperor's mission to the West, the two illuminations were commissioned, again sometime between 1403 and 1405.¹¹⁰ At some point before Chrysoloras left Constantinople in 1407, the codex was assembled: the earlier fourteenth-century text was integrated with the early fifteenth-century miniatures. Relatively soon after Manuel's return from Paris, therefore, the images were commissioned to accompany a pre-existing copy of Pseudo-Dionysios to be sent as a gift to Paris, where he had been hosted for most of his stay.

Regarding the issue of reuse, Erich Lamberz has questioned why a new copy was not commissioned for this diplomatic occasion; why, in other words, a used copy was extended as a gift and by implication whether such an act was less noble than offering a newly copied book.¹¹¹ The problem was not, he insists, that a new deluxe manuscript could not have been produced at this time. After all, in 1375 the Hodegon monastery had produced the presentation copy of the theological works of John VI Kantakouzenos (Paris Gr. 1242), with its exceptionally high-quality miniatures.¹¹² But because by the early fifteenth century, parchment, although still available, had become expensive and scarce, an older book made with the more valued and esteemed parchment was re-purposed.¹¹³ The pre-existing

¹⁰⁹ The paleography of the codex has been dated to the fourteenth century by B. Fonkitch, "Le manuscrit du Louvre des oeuvres de Denys l'Aréopagite" in *Manuscripts grecs dans les collections européennes. Études Paléographiques et Codicologiques* (Moscow, 1999), 58–61 [in Russian]; and Erich Lamberz, "Das Geschenk des Kaisers Manuel II. an das Kloster Saint-Denis und der 'Metochitesschreiber' Michael Klostomalles" in B. Borkopp and T. Steppan (eds.), *Λυθόστυπον: Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte. Festschrift für Marcel Restle* (Stuttgart, 2000), 156–9. I would like to thank Georgi Parpulov for first bringing Fonkitch's study to my attention.

¹¹⁰ Presumably the portrait of the Areopagite was created at the same time, as the inscriptions match those of the imperial portrait: Lamberz, "Das Geschenk," 160. See also André Grabar's comments on the similar modeling of the faces of the author and the Virgin and Child on the imperial portrait, in "Des peintures byzantines de 1408 au Musée du Louvre" in *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet II* (Poitiers, 1966), 1357.

¹¹¹ Lamberz, "Das Geschenk," 160.

¹¹² *BFP*, 286–7 (cat. no. 171); and Drpić, "Art, Hesychasm, and Visual Exegesis." See also Linos Politis, "Eine Schreiberschule im Kloster τῶν Ὁδηγῶν," *BZ*, 51 (1958), 17–36.

¹¹³ As Lamberz, "Das Geschenk," 161, points out, the scribe Georgios Chrysokokkes, for example, uses parchment only when it was provided by his clients. The deluxe copy of the

fourteenth-century book may have been housed in the imperial library, which held, Pero Tafur informs us, “many books and ancient writings and histories . . . so that the emperor’s house may always be well supplied.”¹¹⁴ The emperor could have simply sent this earlier luxury book to the abbey. It would have been a perfectly fine gift, and entirely appropriate for the Abbey of Saint-Denis because of its content. But unlike the copy sent to France by his predecessor in the ninth century, Manuel’s book was embellished with new custom-made portraits. Amending a pre-existing deluxe parchment book with newer images met the time constraints and utilized the more valued writing material. In addition, the portraits marked the book as a personal rather than an anonymous gift and, further, afforded the opportunity to convey more nuanced messages of imperial authority following the failure of his fundraising mission.

Because they date from different times and contexts, scholars have tended to study the images of this book separately from the text. But in my reading they must be considered intimately bound as a gesture of imperial prestation entirely consistent with the Palaiologan emperor’s agenda following his western sojourn. While the text was originally copied for a separate purpose and patron, the images were specifically made for this particular diplomatic context, and the assembled book as a whole configures imperial authority in a distinct and original manner. The combination of selected text and newly commissioned images together associates the imperial office and body of the emperor with a Byzantine genealogy of the Neoplatonic philosophy of Pseudo-Dionysios, an author whose theoretical formulations imbue the emperor’s own intellectual pursuits.¹¹⁵ Two intertwined Dionysian themes

works of Hippocrates commissioned by Alexios Apokaukos around 1338 (on which see *BFP*, 26–7 (cat. no. 2)) employs paper for the text but parchment for the prefatory images of the author and donor. Time too may have been of the essence. It may have been necessary to reuse a book in order for it to be ready to travel with Chrysoloras.

¹¹⁴ Chapter XVII of *Pero Tafur: Travels and Adventures (1435–1439)*, edited and translated by Malcolm Letts (London, 1926). On libraries, see Nigel Wilson, “The Libraries of the Byzantine World” in Dieter Harlfinger (ed.), *Griechische Kodikologie und Textüberlieferung* (Darmstadt, 1980), 276–309 [original version in *GRBS*, 8 (1967), 53–80]; E. Gamillscheg, “Zur Rekonstruktion einer Konstantinopolitaner Bibliothek,” *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, 1 (1981), 282–93; and Wilson’s most recent overview of libraries in the *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, 620–5 with bibliography.

¹¹⁵ While in France, he composed a treatise on the Procession of the Holy Spirit in response to a syllogism presented to him by one of the monks of Saint-Denis. Dennis, *The Letters*, xvii, references this treatise, which was unedited at the time of Dennis’s publication. The full text is now edited: Charalambos Dendrinos, “An Annotated Critical Edition (*editio princeps*) of Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus’ Treatise *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*,” PhD thesis, University of London (Royal Holloway College), 1996. The treatise survives in two manuscripts in the Vatican: Vat. 1107 and Barb. Gr. 219. On the relation of these manuscripts, see Dendrinos, “An Annotated Critical Edition,” xciii. Cf. Barker, *Manuel II*, 192–3, 437. Not

in particular undergird Manuel's gift: the conception of hierarchy and the dynamic of procession and return. These central themes of the Dionysian corpus not only inflect the book's prefatory images but, further, offer the most appropriate theoretical optic through which to view the network of reciprocity within which the book was given. At this point, one could draw upon modern anthropological strategies to unpack the shifting power dynamics of the gift exchange, and indeed such a methodology would illuminate the hierarchical tone of the book and of the diplomatic exchange. But in this instance, the Dionysian content of the book itself offers a more proximate lens for theorizing Byzantine prestation.¹¹⁶

Imperial mediation and the hierarchy of procession and return

Two of the Dionysian treatises – the *Celestial Hierarchy* and the *Earthly Hierarchy* – focus explicitly on hierarchy as the mechanism by which a community mirrors God and accesses divine revelation.¹¹⁷ Hierarchy (ἱεραρχία) is defined as “a sacred order, a state of understanding and an

only does this treatise exhibit a familiarity with the assimilated hagiography of Denis-Dionysios – he makes locative reference to St Dionysios Areopagite as the founder of the Church of Gaul “who suffered martyrdom and lies here” – it also references the *Corpus Dionysiacum* to bolster its position. Specifically, there are seven references to the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, to both the *Divine Names* and the *Mystical Theology*.

¹¹⁶ Neoplatonic philosophies in general and the writings of Dionysios the Areopagite in particular are widely acknowledged as theoretical foundations for Byzantine representational strategies and image theory. See the foundational studies by André Grabar: “Plotin et les origines de l'esthétique médiévale,” *CA*, 1 (1945), 15–34 [repr. *L'Art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen âge* I, 15–29]; and “La représentation de l'Intelligible dans l'art byzantin du Moyen Âge” in *Actes du VIe Congrès international des Études byzantines* II (Paris, 1950–1), 127–43 [repr. *L'Art de la fin de l'Antiquité* I, 51–62]. They are published together with prefatory material in André Grabar, *Les origines de l'esthétique médiévale* (Paris, 1992), 29–121. See also Warren Woodfin, “Celestial Hierarchies and the Earthly Hierarchies in the Art of the Byzantine Church” in Stephenson (ed.), *Byzantine World*, 303–19. My contention here is that the Palaiologan emperor's gift is inflected by the particular order of hierarchy and procession and return that are central structures of the Neoplatonic framework of the Areopagite's writing. Within the diplomatic context for which the codex was created, I argue, these fundamental philosophical ideas also inflect the logic of its extension as a gift.

¹¹⁷ *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 154 (*Celestial Hierarchy* 3, 165A: 6–7): “The goal of a hierarchy, then is to enable beings to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with him. A hierarchy has God as its leader of all understanding and action. It is forever looking directly at the comeliness of God. A hierarchy bears in itself the mark of God. Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself. It ensures that when its members have received this full and divine splendor they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale.” On the language of hierarchy in the *Corpus*, see *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 19–22.

activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine light.”¹¹⁸ Like the concept of *taxis* or order, which serves as the organizing principle of ceremonial life and statecraft in Byzantium, pure hierarchy has for the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* “rejected and abandoned everything of disorder, of disharmony, and of confusion. Rather, it has manifested the order, the harmony and the distinction proportionate to the sacred orders within it.”¹¹⁹ This definition comes at the beginning of the fifth chapter of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, which outlines clerical orders, in particular the consecration or ordination of the hierarch. At this point, the author describes the process through which access to the sacred (to revelation and authority) is transmitted through the different hierarchical ranks. Through “the three-fold division of every hierarchy,” the hierarch (bishop), priest, and deacon are linked to the larger schema of angelic intermediaries.¹²⁰ Those celestial beings closest to God, the conceptual and incorporeal angelic beings whose “lot [is] to be as like God and as imitative of God as is possible,” guide those below upward toward “this sacred perfection.” This fundamental process is described as follows:

To the sacred orders farther below the scale they generously bestow, in proportion to their capacity, the knowledge of the workings of God, knowledge forever made available as a gift to themselves by that divinity which is absolute perfection and which is the source of wisdom for the divinely intelligent beings. The ranks coming in succession to these premier beings are sacredly lifted up by their mediation to enlightenment in the sacred workings of the divinity.¹²¹

In this passage, the author encapsulates an epistemology of divine revelation where God is the perfect source of all, and revelation is passed down through the sacred orders in proportion to the capacity of each successive rank – from the hierarch, to the priests, to the deacons.¹²² The clerical hierarchy is

¹¹⁸ *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 153 (*Celestial Hierarchy* 3, 164D: 1–2).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 233 (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5, 500D: 6–9). See also René Roques, *L’Univers Dionysien, Structure hiérarchique du monde selon pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954); and Ronald F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague, 1969). See also Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, 1989), 38; and Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 21, on the use of the word hierarchy (ἱεραρχία) in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*; and Ahrweiler, *L’idéologie*, 136–41.

¹²⁰ The three angelic triads of three laid out in the *Celestial Hierarchy* mediate between divinity and humanity. The Dionysian pattern of triads is based on Neoplatonic logic as much if not more than Trinitarian.

¹²¹ *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 233–4 (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5, 501A–B).

¹²² Rorem’s discussion of Letter 8 (*Pseudo-Dionysius*, 18–24) offers a particularly clear explanation of hierarchy and clerical status.

thus fixed within the larger hierarchical schema as a mirror of the celestial order.

This hierarchical schema is based on a framework of internal mediation, procession, and return, where, as clearly summarized by Paul Rorem, “the divine remains immanent in itself, yet it also proceeds outwards or downward, and then reverts or returns back to itself.”¹²³ These processes should neither be understood as sequential nor as mirror images of each other; they are simultaneous and causally complementary.¹²⁴ Internally mediated hierarchy is the organizing principle of the Dionysian epistemology and, it is argued here, also of the Palaiologan copy of the *Corpus Dionysiaca*.

Manuel II’s gift of the *Corpus Dionysiaca*, the images of which were commissioned soon after his return from France, opens with a portrait of the author, St Dionysios (Figure 4.3). He is depicted in the liturgical vestments of a Byzantine bishop, wearing the *omophorion*, a long ceremonial scarf bearing a large cross motif draped from one shoulder to the other. Under this symbol of the Episcopal office, he wears a white *sticharion* or tunic, with stripes reserved for a bishop’s vestment, under a *polystaurion phelonion* or eucharistic over-garment worn by both priests and bishops, along with an *epitrachelion* or Episcopal stole and *epigonation*, an ornamental square-shaped textile suspended from his girdle.¹²⁵ He stands at the center of the page with no ground line or hint of setting and stares frontally out of the page holding the gold-encrusted book, his gift, in his hand. Unlike the narrative image of Dionysios in Basil II’s illustrated *Synaxarion* (Figure 4.2), the saint’s cloak, here explicitly a Byzantine bishop’s *phelonion*, covers his book-bearing hand, elevating the codex, his work, to relic status.

This first image situates the textual content of the codex visually. Within the context of the whole book, as we will see below, this seemingly straightforward image of the saint bears interpretive weight: the author is pictured explicitly as a Byzantine bishop with his sacred gift in his hand. His gift is not his head, as in the *kephalophoros* iconography, but rather

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹²⁴ Rorem (*ibid.*) points out the Dionysian debt to Proclus in particular, who expresses procession and return in causal terms (“every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and returns to it”). These movements are not to be taken as sequential but simultaneous. Robert Wisnovsky, “Final and Efficient Causality in Avicenna’s Cosmology and Theology,” *Quaestio*, 2 (2002), 103, has emphasized that the Neoplatonic process of procession and reversion/return are not necessarily mirror images of each other, but rather are “complementary cosmological forces.”

¹²⁵ For descriptions of these liturgical vestments, see Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 9–21. The principal study of liturgical vestments is Tano Papas, *Studien zur Geschichte der Messgewänder im byzantinischen Ritus* (Munich, 1965). Liturgical vestments will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

his book, the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.¹²⁶ The austere portrait of the saintly author in precisely identifiable liturgical vestments with a clear inscription sets the hierarchical tone for the book. Set against an austere field of blank parchment, the portrait of the sacred author, in accordance with traditional Byzantine hagiographic modes, is dressed in liturgical vestments that delineate his station within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹²⁷ Three aspects of his vestment are embellished with gold: the *epitrachelion*, *epigonation*, and the cuff or *epimanikion*. Luminous gold further accents the saint's inscription, halo, and the gem-encrusted cover of the book in his hand – in other words, his name, his sacred status, and his writing. St Dionysios is pictured as the hierarch of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and as the source for the text. He embodies hierarchy in the true Dionysian sense of the word, as the sacred source (*hieron arche*).¹²⁸

With a turn of the page, we move from author to donor and encounter an even more explicit elaboration of the Dionysian hierarchy manifest in the imperial rather than the ecclesiastical realm (Figure 4.4).¹²⁹ Through costume, attribute, inscriptions, and overall compositional design, the Palaiologan family portrait on folio 2r meticulously outlines the procession of past, present, and future imperial power. Both the composition as a whole and the representation of the emperor in particular draw on

¹²⁶ Again the main study of the Byzantine iconography of St Dionysios to date is Walter, "Three Notes." On a diminutive fourteenth-century manuscript in Krakow, a full-page illumination of the Areopagite prefaces the text of the *Celestial Hierarchy*. The image, though significantly smaller and considerably more simple, still shares many of the same formal features of the Louvre representation. See S. Skrzyniarz, "Die Darstellung des hl. Dionysios Areopagites in einem byzantinischen Manuskript aus dem 14. Jahrhundert in der Sammlung der Jagiellonischen Bibliothek in Krakau" in Günter Prinzing and Maciej Salamon (eds.), *Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa 950–1453* (Wiesbaden, 1999), 207–13.

¹²⁷ Robing is an important component of the consecration of the monk in Chapter 6 of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. New garments mark the change in status: "The removal of the clothing of old and the putting on of something else indicates the switch from the sacred life of the middle order to one of greater perfection. For the rite of divine birth includes the changing of the clothes to signify the uplifting of a purified life towards the higher reaches of contemplation and of illumination" (*Pseudo-Dionysius*, 247 (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 6, 536B: 1–5)). See also *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 246 (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 6, 533B: 11–12 and 536B: 11–16). The initiate is also reclothed after baptism (*Pseudo-Dionysius*, 203 (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 2, 396D); and *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 209 (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 2, 404C)). While robing and disrobing symbolize a change in rank, the vestments themselves are never fully elaborated. For Rorem (*Pseudo-Dionysius*, 117), this is another instance of the author's attention to acts rather than static objects: unveiling and distributing of bread, for example, are more important for the author than the size or look of the ritual implements.

¹²⁸ See note 119 above on the Dionysian etymology of hierarchy.

¹²⁹ On the imperial family portrait in particular, see Wessel, "Manuel II. Palaiologos," 219–29; Grabar, "Des peintures byzantines de 1408," 1335–58; Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 139–44; and Lowden, "The Luxury Book," 251–3.

traditional tropes for imperial iconography, but subtly transform those formulae into a charged reminder of the empire that made possible the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.

In most respects, the emperor's effigy conforms to other representations of Manuel II and other Palaiologan portraiture more generally. The emperor is dressed in a dark tunic with gold and gem-encrusted *loros*, and bears a large closed crown surmounted at its summit by a single red oblong gem. He holds a cruciform staff in one hand and a red *akakia* in the other. In terms of attribute and dress, it closely matches his slightly later portrait that is included in one of the seven extant versions of Manuel II's funeral oration for his younger brother Theodore, Despot of Morea, who died in 1407 (Figure 4.5).¹³⁰ On the slightly earlier small ivory *pyxis* introduced earlier, which celebrates the Palaiologan dynastic unity established in 1403 with the ceding of Thessaloniki to John VII, the same basic imperial attributes and dress are adopted for the emperor and also his nephew (Figure 4.0a).¹³¹ The fidelity of ceremonial attire and insignia of power across these examples is striking. As with the visual program on the *pyxis*, however, subtle differences in the inscription suggest the different contexts of the images. In his funeral oration, Manuel's portrait adopts the customary Palaiologan imperial epithet, Manuel Palaiologos, faithful in Christ, *basileus* and *autokrator* of the Romans.¹³² The Louvre portrait, however, identifies Manuel II Palaiologos as *basileus* and *autokrator* of the Romans, standard imperial epithets that are similarly employed by Chrysoloras in the colophon of the very manuscript, but his inscription concludes with the early Byzantine epithet eternal *augustos* (ΑΕΙ ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΟΣ).¹³³ Especially by contrast with his otherwise identical representation in the funeral oration, this invocation of both the past and eternity is significant in its relation to the program of the page and the gift as a whole.

¹³⁰ The manuscript, now Paris BN Suppl. Gr. 309, fol. 6r., was executed in Constantinople between 1409 and 1411, that is, just a few years after the portrait for the Louvre manuscript (which, again, was completed by 1405). See *BFP*, 26–7 (cat. no. 1). Note that in the funeral oration miniature, the emperor is dressed in dark puple rather than black, as in the Louvre copy. On the oration itself, see Chrysostomides, *Funeral Oration*.

¹³¹ See the discussion at the end of the Introduction to Part II. Note the consistency of imperial dress as well in the double portrait of John VI Kantakouzenos on folio 123v of his theological works in Paris Gr. 1242, on which see note 16 in the Introduction to Part II above.

¹³² ΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ Ο ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ. John VI Kantakouzenos is inscribed according to the same formula in his double portrait, on which see above: Ἰω(άννης) ἐν Χ(ριστῷ) ᾧ Θ(εῷ) ᾧ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς κ(αὶ) αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων Παλαιολόγος Ἄγγελος ὁ Καντακουζηνός.

¹³³ ΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΕΝ ΧΩ ΤΩ ΘΩ / ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ Ο ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ / ΚΑΙ ΑΕΙ ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΟΣ. Wessel, "Manuel II. Palaiologos," 222, notes that this uncommon inscription goes back to Roman imperial titulature.



Figure 4.5 Portrait of Manuel II Palaiologos from his funeral oration for his brother, Paris BN Suppl. Gr. 309, fol. 6r

In the Louvre portrait, the eternal *augustos* Manuel is set within a precisely ordered triangular composition that schematizes both the notion of ceremonial *taxis* and Dionysian hierarchy. At the apex of the triangle, the Virgin and Child reach outward, the Christ child's arms spread outward in benediction and Theotokos reaches down in a gesture of investiture toward the halos of the emperor on the left and the empress on the right of the page. Unlike the dark tunic of the emperor, the Empress Helena, described as *augusta*,¹³⁴ is depicted in bright red gold-embroidered dress with wide sleeves and a jeweled *loros*. While Manuel bears a cruciform scepter, in conformity with the conventions for imperial portraiture, Helena carries a pearl-studded scepter and wears a tall open crown surmounted by a row of smaller gems, as was customary for empresses.¹³⁵

This triangular figural arrangement is characteristic of Byzantine imperial portraiture across media and period. Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071–8) and Maria of Alania, for example, are represented according to such compositional layout in the manuscript of the Homilies of John Chrysostom in Paris, Coislin 79 (Figure 4.6).¹³⁶ The eleventh-century empress and emperor, dressed in imperial garb holding the insignia, stand frontally, while a bust-length image of Christ situated above them reaches down and touches the tip of each of their crowns. Even though the composition is formally balanced, subtle visual clues suggest the precedence of the emperor over the empress. Christ directs his attention to his right, to the emperor; his head is inclined in the emperor's direction. Similarly, in the twelfth century, the imperial portrait of John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43) and his son Alexios in the Vatican (Vat. Urb. Gr. 2) employs a triangular composition to convey the procession of power (Figure 4.7).¹³⁷ Imperial father and son stand in full regalia with their crowns touched by the hand of Christ, this time an enthroned Christ flanked by personifications identified by inscription as

¹³⁴ ΕΛΕΝΗ ΕΝ ΧΩ / ΤΩ ΘΩ ΠΙΣΤΗ ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΑ. On her title, see Wessel, "Manuel II. Palaiologos," 224. For the context surrounding the marriage of Manuel and Helena Dragaš, see Stephen Reinert, "What the Genoese Cast upon Helena Dragash's Head: Coins, Not Confecti," *ByzF*, 20 (1994): 235–46.

¹³⁵ On the dress of the imperial figures, see Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality*, 322–3. Parani further specifies the empress's *loros* as simplified and points out that the crown may have been worn over a veil.

¹³⁶ On B.N., Ms. Coislin 79, which was later repainted so as to alter the portrait from Michael VII Doukas to Nikephoros Botaniates, see Evans and Wixom (eds.), *Glory of Byzantium*, 207–9 (cat. no. 143) with bibliography. The same point could be demonstrated with reference to one of the enamels of the Khakuli triptych in Tblissi, on which see Titos Papamastorakis, "Re-Deconstructing the Khakhuli Triptych," *ΔΧΑΕ*, 23 (2002), 225–54.

¹³⁷ On Vat. Urb. Gr. 2, see Evans and Wixom (eds.), *Glory of Byzantium*, 209–10 (cat. no. 144) with bibliography.



Figure 4.6 Portrait of Nikephoros III/Michael VII and Maria of Alania, Paris BN, Coislin 79, fol. 1(2bis)v

Charity and Justice. The image also conveys visual precedence, despite the superficial symmetry of the format. The senior ruler stands on the far left of the page receiving the blessing of Christ's right hand and his labrum is taller than that of Alexios (it extends above the upper edge of his halo, while that of Alexios extends merely to the lower edge of his crown). Like the earlier Coislin miniature, Christ's favor is visually directed subtly but discernibly



Figure 4.7 Portrait of John II Komnenos and Alexios, Vatican Library, Vat. Urb. Gr.2, fol. 10v

toward the emperor – only this time such favor is not conveyed with the turn of his head, but rather with his right foot, which juts out toward the left and overlaps the senior emperor's shoulder. These imperial portraits are all governed by a similar overarching compositional formula of divine

sanction based on subtle differentiation of detail that ultimately conveys precedence and hierarchy.

The Louvre imperial family portrait adopts the basic triangular investiture formula, but, unlike these previous visualizations of sovereignty, the Palaiologan couple in the Louvre portrait are shown being blessed by the Virgin and Child in a particular configuration best characterized as the Blachernitissa.¹³⁸ The image of the Virgin Blachernitissa bears particular imperial connections because the Blacherna Church was adjacent to the imperial palace, which served as the primary residence for both the Komnenian and Palaiologan families. While the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria was carried before Michael VIII at the 1261 *adventus* ceremony to celebrate the return of the Virgin's favor to the imperial city, the icon of the Virgin Blachernitissa was also an important component of the sacred Palaiologan pantheon. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 3, it featured prominently on early Palaiologan coinage. Bissera Pentcheva has examined the cultivation of the Virgin's cult in the service of imperial agendas, highlighting how the Komnenoi in particular drew on both major toponymic icons, the Hodegetria and the Blachernitissa, to support and authorize their rule. Already by the eleventh century, each had accrued specific associations: while the Hodegetria stayed in Constantinople as the city's palladium, the Blachernitissa, due to her associations with victory, was carried out of the city on military campaigns.¹³⁹ The icon and its power, in other words, were mobile.

Chapter 3 showed how early Palaiologan gold coinage reconfigured the Virgin's image such that she appeared on one side of the coin framed by the walls of Constantinople, while the other side featured a scene of imperial supplication and presentation. The Louvre miniature, in contrast, depicts the Virgin reaching down and touching the emperor's crown directly. Such a configuration recalls earlier coinage. Komnenian coins, for example, feature the Virgin blessing/crowning the emperor, and this design was continued on the first coinage of Michael VIII Palaiologos issued in Magnesia. On the Louvre imperial family portrait, however, the holy image at the apex of the triangular scene of sanction makes a visible link to the icon of the Blacherna, thus forging a connection to former imperial authority and also to victory, since the Blachernitissa was sent out

¹³⁸ This identification is based on visual configuration, not inscription (which just reads MP ΘY). Rather than referencing an iconographic typology or epithet, the Blachernitissa is a toponymic designation named for the location where the particular miraculous icon of the Virgin was kept: the Blacherna Church.

¹³⁹ See Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 56, 59, 63; and discussion in Chapter 3.

of the imperial city on military campaigns. This image then conveys a clear message of divinely sanctioned imperial authority and also a more subtle allusion to the mobility of the sacred image. That such an image prefaces the book being sent out of the city to Paris on behalf of the emperor in a time of need perhaps suggests a sanctioning of the imperial effigy in a foreign land.

In addition to referencing the Blachernitissa, with its associations of mobility and victory, the portrait's Theotokos triangulates the overall message of the composition: the procession of imperial authority. Because the Blacherna Church held not one but a number of miraculous icons, a wide range of iconographies are designated by the name Blachernitissa,¹⁴⁰ including one in which the Christ child, circumscribed by a medallion, hovers in front of the orant Virgin's chest. On the page of the Louvre manuscript, however, sacred mother and child, not separated by a medallion, echo each other's gestures of benediction and, further, they set into motion a series of distinct hierarchical distinctions and a dynamic of divinely sanctioned imperial authority.

Like a diagram, the imperial portrait delineates the procession of imperial power. The representation of the Virgin and the Child forms a triangle at the apex of the larger triangular composition. The Virgin extends both arms not upwards in an orant gesture, but down to touch the halos of Manuel and Helena. The point of contact is significant for the manner in which it encodes a subtle preference for the emperor. The Virgin's left hand appears to alight on the empress's crown on the corner closest to the Virgin, but upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that contact is not made. Conversely, the Virgin's right hand decidedly meets the emperor's crown as it touches the red gem that sits at its very center and thus draws into alignment the erect body of the emperor, with such verticality reinforced by the long jeweled *loros*. Beyond the point of sacro-imperial contact, and lack thereof, the entire posture of the Virgin thus favors the emperor, as her face turns slightly but discernibly in his direction. Similarly, the Christ child positioned in front of the Virgin extends his arms outward in a blessing that seems to indicate equivalence, but ultimately suggests precedence. Echoing the pose of his sacred mother, Christ's head is turned slightly toward the emperor and, while his arms stretch out in both directions, his right is positioned further

¹⁴⁰ Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 76. At least five image types are linked to the name Blachernitissa: (1) the orant Virgin facing forward without the Christ child; (2) the orant Virgin without the Christ child shown in profile; (3) the Virgin with the Christ child in embrace; (4) the orant Virgin with a medallion of Christ hovering at her chest; and (5) the orant Virgin holding the medallion of Christ at her chest.

and lower to the right, closer to the emperor than his left hand is to the empress.¹⁴¹

The triangular composition of the Louvre manuscript's portrait, though well situated within a tradition of imperial portraiture – especially in its insistence on finely tuned hierarchical gradations – further schematizes the divine and courtly hierarchy by depicting not only the emperor and empress below the Virgin and Child but also by representing their children along the ground line of the page. In this way, the image articulates a temporal order whereby the current ruler's authority, sanctioned by the Virgin and Child represented in a manner with distinctive imperial overtones, extends to the heirs of the Palaiologan throne, Byzantium's future.

In the lowest zone of the page, the three *porphyrogenitoi* are arranged from the left to right in descending order of height according to their age and precedence. On the far-left edge of the page, on Manuel's right, their eldest son, the future Emperor John VIII, wears identical imperial attire to his father and bears the same imperial attributes (crown, staff, and *akakia*). He is likewise distinguished by a halo. These visual signs parallel his linguistic identification as *basileus*.¹⁴² Between their parents stand the second- and third-born imperial princes descending in height, Theodore and Andronikos, respectively.¹⁴³ Both wear open diadems and lack halos. Over their long red tunics, Theodore and Andronikos each wear matching deep red mantles embroidered with elaborate gold roundels and carry pearl-studded scepters like their mother. While the inscriptions explicitly identify the relative precedence of each figure, costume and visual attributes provide a pictorial legend, in conjunction with scale and figural placement. John shares the same garb and crown as his father, which designates him as heir and more specifically as co-emperor, though still a junior partner.¹⁴⁴ Because the two younger sons lack the imperial *loros* and wear open diadems instead of the closed imperial crown, they are situated at the lowest rung of the imperial family hierarchy. That they are the only figures in the image without halos makes their relative precedence unmistakable. Moreover, their attributes and the crimson red color of their garb align them visually not

¹⁴¹ The contour of the shoulders of both sacred figures underscores this posture of preference.

The more gentle slope of their right shoulders suggests a further extension of their right arms to the left side of the page in the emperor's direction, in contradistinction to the steeper angle of their left shoulders, which indicates less of a reach on the empress's side of the page.

¹⁴² ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΗC) ΕΝ / ΧΩ ΤΩ ΘΩ ΠΙCΤΟC / ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC / Ο ΥΙΟC ΑΥΤΟΥ.

¹⁴³ Their inscriptions will be addressed below, 261–62.

¹⁴⁴ See note 147 below, and further in Chapter 5, on the status of John as *basileus*.

with their Byzantine father, but with their mother Helena, the Serbian princess who married the Byzantine emperor in 1392.¹⁴⁵

In the Louvre manuscript's portrait, the symmetrical arrangement that one might expect of an imperial portrait, as seen in the previous examples introduced (Figures 4.6–4.8), is interrupted for the sake of hierarchical clarity. The three imperial children are not all positioned between their parents: instead, John stands to Manuel's right, just as Manuel is positioned on Christ's right. This unusual compositional strategy conveys in explicit visual terms the procession of imperial power. Divine sanction unmistakably emanates from the Virgin and Child and immediately proceeds to the reigning Byzantine emperor, whose divinely sanctioned authority then passes to the future of Byzantium, John VIII. This procession is further expressed in spatial terms as the future emperor is clearly positioned in front of the current emperor. The edge of John's halo overlaps with his father's right elbow, and the edge of his *loros* draped over his arm is visible in front of Manuel's dark tunic. They are the only two figures to overlap so clearly and their bodily contiguity creates a sense of depth.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, Manuel's second-born son, Theodore, is formally delineated as next in line in terms of height, but also in spatial terms and distance from the imperial body of his father. Unlike his older brother, John, who partially overlays the emperor's figure, Theodore is depicted as discrete and separate. At the same time, the edge of the emperor's draped *loros* falls behind Theodore's shoulder, thus creating depth. The emanation of imperial power, then, is pictured through distance from the imperial body and also in terms of spatial recession: John, as immediate heir to Manuel's throne, is closest to his father's body and to the page's picture plane; second-born Theodore is positioned in front of the emperor but is also distanced from him. The three form a triad with the emperor as the apex in terms of height and also as point of origin spatially leading out to the edge of the picture plane. The emperor is positioned as their source, just as the Blachernitissa is the source of his authority.

This spatial and hierarchical schema of the imperial family portrait parallels the Dionysian framework of internal mediation and procession and return. As a visualization of these fundamental processes, the portrait's configuration, rather than offering straightforward symmetry, presents a series of internally mediated triads (or "sacred orders" to employ Dionysian

¹⁴⁵ See the discussion at the beginning of the next chapter (with bibliography).

¹⁴⁶ Although the lower edge of the page is badly abraded, it appears that all the figures stand along the same ground line, except for John. The hem of his tunic seems to be slightly lower than the rest, thus suggesting that he occupies a closer plane of the page and designating him as the most proximate figure.

language). Like the fundamentally triadic formula of Dionysian thought, the composition is organized according to a triangular logic, with the Virgin and Child reaching down and drawing into a triad the halos of the emperor and empress. But nuanced hierarchical variation destabilizes any sense of stasis and balance. As the eye follows the divine gestures of sanction along the left edge of the figural group, another triangle – a spatial and temporal triangle – is inaugurated with the emperor at its peak and extending or processing out to John, who is positioned closest to the viewer. These vertices are not merely formal but are also philosophical and ideological. The current emperor's body mediates the sacred and imperial orders. In a manner analogous to the hierarch in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the emperor is pictured receiving and transmitting divinely sanctioned power. While the Dionysian text explicitly elaborates the hierarch's process of transmission, the emperor's analogous role, absent from the text of the *Corpus*, is adumbrated visually on this page here. The imperial image thus complements Dionysian thought by visually representing an imperial hierarchy as the counterpart to the angelic and clerical hierarchy outlined in the text.

Through its triadic logic and hierarchical schematization of ceremonial dress and insignia, the Palaiologan family portrait illustrates the Dionysian conception of internal mediation, again where the procession of authority spreads through each rank according to the capacity of each rank. The inscriptions further support the Dionysian conception of internal mediation where the rank of the imperial scions is prescribed in relation to their father. While the emperor is identified by name, as Manuel Palaiologos, and by his current official imperial title (*basileus* and *autokrator*), and also designated the eternal *augustos*, his sons are defined in relation to him. The inscriptions for all three heirs conclude by indicating their status as sons of the emperor – each one ends with “his son” (Ο ΥΙΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ). While they are all identified as his sons, the inscriptions differentiate their relative rank. As heir apparent, the eldest, John, closely follows the titulature of the emperor, including the designation *basileus*.¹⁴⁷ Second-born Theodore

¹⁴⁷ Again: ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΗC) ΕΝ / ΧΩ ΤΩ ΘΩ ΠΙCΤΟC / ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC / Ο ΥΙΟC ΑΥΤΟΥ. His designation *basileus* here has been read as an indication of his status of co-emperor or possibly even future emperor. While Barker, *Manuel II*, 350, takes the inscription to suggest that John was heir apparent, Wessel, “Manuel II. Palaiologos,” 225–6, argues that it suggests more than that. In the next chapter, I will address the methodological stakes involved in relying on inscriptions such as this, with reference to John VIII specifically. The crux of my point is that the inscription should not be taken out of context: this imperial family portrait was not an official or legal document, but rather a sophisticated visualization of imperial ideology extended as a gift at a precarious diplomatic juncture. It thus projected a particular vision of imperium with John as the future of the empire currently headed by Manuel II.

is designated as *porphyrogenetos* and given the official title of despot,¹⁴⁸ and Andronikos, the youngest, lacks specificity.¹⁴⁹ These distinctions, which correspond to the spatial hierarchy and the relative precedence indicated by dress and insignia discussed above, all indicate that their authority is traceable through their appropriate rank to the emperor, whose authority derives from the Virgin and Child at the apex of the composition.

Beyond the formal logic of the page itself, the philosophical process of internally mediated procession and return inflects the politics of the book's exchange. Unlike the sequence of the Dionysian treatises in modern translation, but like many of the other medieval copies of the *Corpus*, the codex in the Louvre begins with the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the opening lines of which read:¹⁵⁰

"Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." But there is something more. Inspired by the Father, each procession of the Light spreads itself generously toward us, and, in its power to unify, it stirs us by lifting us up. It returns us back to the oneness and deifying simplicity of the Father who gathers us in. For, as the sacred Word says, "from him and to him are all things."¹⁵¹

The Dionysian order of procession and return is characterized here in terms of gift-giving. Buttressed by biblical quotations that explicitly evoke receiving and returning gifts,¹⁵² the text underscores the basic tenet that generosity (procession) uplifts (returns). As in the previously cited excerpt from the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, divine revelation generously proceeds proportionally through the ranks in order to uplift and mirror those above. Procession and return can thus be read as the basic mechanism of gift exchange where a gift given (procession) engenders a counter-gift (a return). As a diplomatic gift strategically conceived in the wake of his failed western diplomatic mission, Manuel selected a text that underscored the value of both gift and

¹⁴⁸ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ / ΠΟΡΦΥΡΟΓΕΝ/ΗΤΟΣ ΕΥΤΥ / ΧΗΣ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ / Ο ΥΙΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ.

¹⁴⁹ ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΣ / ΑΥΘΕΝΤΟΠΟΥ/ΛΟΣ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ Ο ΥΙ/ΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ.

¹⁵⁰ The contents of the Louvre codex are as follows: *Celestial Hierarchy* (fols. 7–52v), *Divine Names* (fols. 55v–146), *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (fols. 147–204), *Mystical Theology* (fols. 204v–11) and then the *Letters* (fols. 212–37). The treatises are prefaced by a table (fol. 3v) and Maximos's prologue (fols. 3v–5v). The ninth-century gift of Michael II (Paris Gr. 437) likewise opens with the *Celestial Hierarchy* (fols. 1–40) and continues in slightly different order with the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (fols. 41–102), the *Divine Names* (fols. 103–92), and the *Letters* (fols. 193–216). See Omont, "Manuscrit des oeuvres," 235–6, who discusses the conspicuous absence of the *Mystical Theology* as well as missing folia. The modern edition, Luibheid (1987), based on PG 3, is as follows: *Divine Names*, *Mystical Theology*, *Celestial Hierarchy*, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and *Letters*.

¹⁵¹ *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 145 (=PG 3, *Celestial Hierarchy* 1: 120B).

¹⁵² The quotation with which the passage begins is from James 1:17 and the ending quotation is from Romans 11:36.

return gift, and illustrated it with a visual map of the procession of imperial and sacerdotal authority. The imperial portrait, with its subtle hierarchical distinctions, charts divinely sanctioned authority through the emperor's person.

Moreover, the imperial effigy mediates both imperial genealogy in the Palaiologan family portrait (again, Manuel is shown transmitting his divinely granted authority to the next generation in proportion to relative rank) and also the Dionysian text itself. The book's first illustration portrays the text's author, St Dionysios, distinctly dressed as a Byzantine bishop, thus directly inserting the author-saint into the ecclesiastical hierarchy elaborated in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, which is pictured as a sacred relic in his hands. The second illustration of the codex positions the book's donor as an icon of precisely delineated imperial hierarchy where he serves as the crucial link in the imperial procession of power, receiving and transmitting his authority, and as the divinely sanctioned leader of the very empire that made the Areopagite's writings possible in the first place.

The order of the images and their layout further underscores the mediating role of the emperor's effigy. The imperial family portrait is positioned between the visual representation of the author, who occupies the center of the first folio, and his writings – the actual text. This emperor's effigy, literally situated between the author and his text, relies on a triadic formula that unfolds spatially. Thus, while the emperor's body mediates the lineage of imperium on the second folio, the whole imperial page acts as an intermediary between the Byzantine hierarch and the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. In this way, the Palaiologan portrait serves as a reminder of the genealogy of Dionysian thought and the shared or assimilated hagiography, a reminder that ultimately emphasizes Byzantium – the ecclesiastical and imperial hierarchy – as its source and crucial link.

Conclusion: rhetoric as diplomacy

In Manuel's diplomatic gift we find a coalescence of philosophical and hagiographic traditions in the service of a contemporary political message. Fundamentally, the Dionysian conceptions of procession and return, which permeate the imagery, also relate to the context of the book's transfer. As the opening to the *Celestial Hierarchy* makes clear, ostensive generosity (procession) engenders a counter-gift (a return). For Manuel, the desired return could be nothing other than aid for his empire, the empire that made possible the writings of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* through which the patron saint of Gaul was given an apostolic pedigree in the ninth century. Thinking

back to the textile given by Michael VIII to the Genoese in conjunction with the conclusion of the Treaty of Nymphaion, the ideal return gift was assistance for the restoration of the imperial city, which stood as prime metonym for the empire. The thirteenth-century imperial gift of silk was extended at a moment when he was vying for that imperial seat of power and seeking the military assistance to wrest it from Latin control. Manuel's early fifteenth-century gift, in parchment rather than silk, is directed toward similar ends, but this time toward the salvation of the Byzantine capital from Ottoman forces.

The Louvre codex embodies the tragic unsuccessful gift that is not reciprocated in the desired manner.¹⁵³ It did not motivate its recipient to contribute any serious assistance and, without western aid, Constantinople fell further under Ottoman control to the point of its dissolution half a century later. The absence of intended return is all the more pronounced in this gift exchange, for the very content of the book speaks theologically and philosophically of procession and return – of necessary and instantaneous reciprocity.

Through the combined selection of a pre-existing text and the commissioning of new miniatures, Manuel's gift was strategically designed to remind its recipients of his previous imperial visit, the genealogy of Dionysian thought, and, by extension, the contemporary Byzantine cause. The Louvre book, with its sophisticated articulation of imperial sovereignty, constituted not only a sequel to the ninth-century copy of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* in the Abbey of Saint-Denis but also a surrogate sequel to the emperor's very person. Following the apparent failure of the imperial body to rally sufficient support, the illuminated imperial effigy was extended as a gift. This visual icon of imperium, blessed by the Blachernitissa with her associations of victory and mobility, is set within a precisely delineated temporal order – with an epithet that refers to eternity and with Manuel's sons positioned alongside him as the future of the empire. To interpret the hierarchical distinctions of the imperial image as mere propaganda¹⁵⁴ is to fail to appreciate the subtle reconfiguration of visual sovereignty conveyed by this gift.

This chapter has read the manuscript's imagery through the Dionysian lens of the text it prefaces as a means of understanding the mobilization of the painted imperial image in the years following the emperor's real and prolonged presence in Italy, France, and England. The book sent by Manuel to Saint-Denis should be seen as a visualization of the imperial body and

¹⁵³ The afterlife of the manuscript, especially in comparison to the earlier Byzantine copy of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* sent to Saint-Denis, is treated in Hilsdale, "The Agency of the Object."

¹⁵⁴ As interpreted by Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 143, who writes that the imperial portrait "can be interpreted as a propaganda expedient to show that the Byzantine emperor still derived his power from heaven and enjoyed divine protection."

office, present and future, as the ultimate source for Dionysian thought. The current emperor, who had been in the West six years earlier, and the future emperor, who would travel in person to Italy twenty years later for the Council of Florence, are pictured as the crucial link in the hierarchical schema, as the proximate source of the writing of Dionysios the Areopagite, who was at the time understood by its recipients to be the French patron saint.

While the imperial office was no longer associated with silk and relics in the early fifteenth century, the beleaguered empire was still considered the center of Greek learning. And regardless of the outcome of the diplomatic exchange, it is significant that the emperor's gift was hand-delivered by Manuel Chrysoloras, whose diplomatic service to the emperor often merged with his intellectual pursuits of teaching Greek language and literature. Ian Thompson has called attention to the potential broader political agenda of Chrysoloras's interaction with Italian humanistic circles, linking them ideologically to his diplomatic missions.¹⁵⁵ By educating Italians in Greek learning, he was essentially cultivating a taste for Greek culture.¹⁵⁶ This cultivation of Greek can thus be seen as a diplomatic strategy, and the extension of a copy of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* to France via Chrysoloras constitutes part of such an agenda. Against the potential failure of the majesty of his imperial person to generate support and the additional failure of his letters, relics, and even an icon, recourse to a Greek book supports this hypothesis. With the end of the era of the Byzantine relic and silk, western appetites craved new eastern objects, specifically books from Byzantium. Books and ancient learning were, in Holger Klein's words, "the last truly priceless yet still affordable Byzantine gift."¹⁵⁷ The extension of this gift suggests an awareness of these western desires and a recognition of the relevance of this particular author for the emperor's hosts in Paris.

John Barker points out that three of the era's prominent ambassadors to the West – Demetrios Kydones, Manuel Chrysoloras, and George Gemistos Plethon – were simultaneously key figures in the transmission of Byzantine

¹⁵⁵ Thompson, "Manuel Chrysoloras," 78, characterizes this ideological agenda as follows: "if someone, somehow, could convince the right people in the West that the East had something worth saving – the entire heritage of Greek learning – then perhaps help would be forthcoming." Thompson's position, though called into question by Barker (see below, note 158), has been followed by many scholars, including, most recently, Chryssa A. Maltezou, "An Enlightened Byzantine Teacher in Florence: Manuel Chrysoloras" in Elias Voulgarakis (ed.), *Orthodoxy and Oecumene: Gratitude Volume in Honour of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios* (Athens, 2001), 447.

¹⁵⁶ Thompson's characterization of this situation in terms of proselytization may be too strong.

¹⁵⁷ Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires," 312. Cf. Mergiali-Sahas, "An Ultimate Wealth," 275, who emphasizes the relic as the only Byzantine asset.

humanism to Renaissance Italy. But he is wary of seeing the promotion of Greek as an imperially sanctioned endeavor or as the official diplomatic policy.¹⁵⁸ Without documents that outline the precise contours of the official diplomatic program of the Palaiologoi, it would not be appropriate to define these cultural activities as official “state” policy. Yet it is undeniable that the emperor’s personal diplomatic mission to the West, and the gift he subsequently offered to his French hosts coincided with a pronounced western interest in things Greek, an interest of which the emperor and his entourage were well aware. Recall that in Milan, en route to Paris, the emperor offered as gifts a relic fragment and icon to his host Giangaleazzo at the same moment as Chrysoloras was consolidating his educational program. Again, the emperor’s western travels intersected at the beginning and end with Chrysoloras, and it was to him that the deluxe illuminated gift for Saint-Denis was later entrusted.¹⁵⁹

The relationship between the emperor and Chrysoloras returns us to the chapter’s initial discussion about the relationship between culture and politics, between the elevated “escapist” literati of Manuel II’s epistolary circle on the one hand and the devastating political realities on the other, and also to the nuances associated with interpreting this disjunction. In the letter to Kydones written by Manuel while on campaign with Bayezid in Asia Minor in 1391, introduced at the beginning of the chapter, Manuel speaks of the plight of the empire being wrongly blamed on literary studies.¹⁶⁰ Nearly twenty years later, in a letter to the metropolitan of Thessalonica written between 1408 and 1410, the emperor muses over literary matters and his own rhetorical abilities. While contemporary writing can only be deemed inferior in comparison to the writings of the ancients – to compare the

¹⁵⁸ Barker, “Emperors, Embassies, and Scholars,” 159–63. Barker thus calls into question Thompson’s position, pointing out that there is insufficient evidence to prove direct imperial involvement with Chrysoloras’s teaching in Europe. Barker’s issue is that Thompson and others have located the agency of Greek cultivation in the imperial administration specifically, as an official imperially sponsored endeavor. But there is no reason to assume that the opposite is true – that Manuel had nothing to do with it or that the cultivation of Greek was not part of the general diplomatic agenda. Barker (163) leaves open the possibility that Kydones had been “grooming” Chrysoloras as a kind of “surrogate cultural missionary.” See also Barker, *Manuel II*, 172 n. 88.

¹⁵⁹ It should also be noted that the emperor engaged in intellectual debate on the very site of Saint-Denis. As noted above (note 115), Manuel’s treatise on the Procession of the Holy Spirit, which was written in response to a syllogism presented to him by one of the monks of Saint-Denis, exhibits a familiarity with the assimilated hagiography of Denis-Dionysios and references as support the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Again, see Dendrinis, “An Annotated Critical Edition.”

¹⁶⁰ See discussion above, 216–17.

two, he writes with a quick allusion to Homer, would be to compare “gold to bronze” – Manuel still continues to write. Writing for the emperor is a moral imperative; according to a model of exemplarity, writing sets the model: “I continue to do some writing, not as much as I ought, but as much as the time permits, in order that I might be an example to my subjects of the love of letters, so that as they mingle so much with barbarians they might not become completely barbarized.”¹⁶¹ Along with the letter, Manuel sent to the metropolitan an oration, “an offering from the fruit of our labors.” Around this time, he also sent an example of his writing to Chrysoloras in Italy in 1409–10, in particular the oration he composed for his brother Theodore, a copy of which preserves his portrait as noted above (Figure 4.5).¹⁶² In the accompanying letter, Manuel solicited feedback from Chrysoloras on his work, comparing himself to painters and sculptors of antiquity who approached the great Apelles and Lysippus.¹⁶³ Chrysoloras finds no fault with the emperor’s oration and takes the opportunity to advocate the promotion of education and the revival of literary studies as the solution to contemporary political problems. Chrysoloras’s response, the “Exhortation on Behalf of the Nation,” explicitly links the salvation of the Byzantine state to the promotion of its culture.¹⁶⁴ Even if not official state policy, this idea was very much under discussion among the emperor’s inner circle and, as noted above, Manuel’s diplomatic corps was comprised of his inner circle. Rather than appealing to divine intervention – to another *thauma* of the Virgin – Chrysoloras acknowledges the importance of Greek language and literature as the common cultural heritage passed from Greece to Rome to Byzantium. By this time, however, Chrysoloras had converted to Latin Catholicism, as his teacher Kydones had before him.

¹⁶¹ Letter 52: Dennis, *The Letters*, 150; Barker, *Manuel II*, 422–3; Dennis, “Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality,” 132.

¹⁶² Chrysostomides, *Manuel II Palaeologus Funeral Oration*. Theodore died in Mistra in 1407. According to Dennis, *The Letters*, 101, Manuel had intended to deliver the oration on the second anniversary of Theodore’s death, but the Turkish civil wars prevented this and it was read instead by Isidore, monk and later Metropolitan of Monemvasia, and later still Metropolitan of Kiev.

¹⁶³ Letter 56: Dennis, *The Letters*, 158–9.

¹⁶⁴ On the Παράκλινσις ὑπὲρ τοῦ γένους, see C. G. Patrinelis, “An Unknown Discourse of Chrysoloras Addressed to Manuel II Palaeologus,” *GRBS*, 13(4) (1972), 497–502.

5 | Wearing allegiances and the construction of a visual *oikoumene*

One of the most forceful evocations of the universal claims of the Byzantine emperor and his theocratic sovereignty comes in response to a challenge to that very imperial authority. Patriarch Anthony IV, who crowned Manuel Palaiologos in 1392 in Hagia Sophia, sits at the center of a negotiation of Byzantine political authority between Constantinople and Moscow. Apparently Vasily I Dmitrievič had opposed the liturgical celebration of the emperor's name in his lands. In a justifiably famous reproach to this "most noble great king of Moscow and all of Russia,"¹ the patriarch reminds Dmitrievič that there could be no church without the emperor. Although the Russians may have been more interested in Byzantine spirituality than empire, Patriarch Anthony suggests that for the Byzantines, these could not be disentangled. According to his letter to the Muscovite ruler in 1393:

even if, by God's permission, the nations have constricted the authority and domain of the emperor, still to this day the emperor possesses the same charge from the church and the same rank and the same prayers. The *basileus* is anointed with the great *myron* and is appointed *basileus* and *autokrator* of the Romans, indeed of all Christians. Everywhere the name of the emperor is commemorated by all patriarchs and metropolitans and bishops wherever men are called Christians, [a thing] before no other ruler or governor ever received.²

¹ On various titles used for rulers of Kiev and Moscow, see Alexander Vasiliev, "Was Old Russia a Vassal State of Byzantium?" *Speculum*, 7(3) (1932), 358–60; and Andrzej Poppe, "Words that Serve the Authority: On the Title of 'Grand Prince' in Kievan Rus'" and "On the Title of Grand Prince in the Tale of Ihor's Campaign," both reprinted in *Christian Russia in the Making* (Aldershot, 2007), IX and X, respectively.

² Translated in Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, 143; F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi—sacra et profana* (Vienna, 1860–90) II, 190–1. See Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (London, 1971), 264–6; John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino–Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1981), 254–6; E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium: From Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus: Passages from Byzantine Writers and Documents* (Oxford, 1957), 194; Barker, *Manuel II*, 106–9. The text continues: "Therefore, my son, you are wrong to affirm that we have the church without an emperor, for it is impossible for Christians to have a church and no empire." Patriarch Anthony IV's letter holds a central role in the historiography of Byzantine–Russian relations and Byzantine political philosophy. It is often taken at face value, as an indication of the ecumenicity of the empire and the dependence of Russia on Byzantium.

The reference to the constricting of terrestrial authority and domain relates specifically to contemporary Ottoman threats, but it is here conveyed as part of a divine plan. Moreover, the emperor's sovereignty, which distinguishes him from other rulers, is his consecration by the church. As *basileus* and *autokrator*, Patriarch Anthony insists, the emperor was consecrated the anointed ruler of the Christian *oikoumene* and as such was to be commemorated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.³

This vision of eternal imperial authority sanctioned by the church, of course, stands in contrast to the harsh contemporary realities of the later Byzantine period. The Muscovite ruler's dissidence underscores the very fragility of this imperial ideal.⁴ At the time of the patriarch's letter, both the Byzantine and Muscovite rulers paid tribute to the "infidel," Manuel II Palaiologos to the Ottomans and Vasily I Dmitrievich to the Golden Horde.⁵ Still, even when their vision bore little if no relationship to reality, the Byzantines maintained that the emperor occupied the center of a family of kings. "When facts and beliefs contradicted each other," as George Ostrogorsky has put it, "beliefs prevailed."⁶

The patriarch's letter stresses that, despite contemporary circumstances, the emperor's authority is eternal. But how can an eternal sense of imperium be projected from an impoverished empire ravaged by both external and internal threats? How, in other words, can an image of ascendancy be created in an era of decline? Furthermore, how can an imperial image reconcile the distinct visions of empire expressed by the patriarch's letter? In light of these questions, the present chapter investigates the visual manifestation of the emperor's sacro-imperial authority in the face of constricted

For a sharp criticism of such a position, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 100–6, who emphasizes that the letter should not be taken out of its circumscribed ideological context.

³ For a contextualization of the implications of the patriarch's letter, see Simon Franklin, "The Empire of the *Rhomaioi* as Viewed from Kievan Russia: Aspects of Byzantino–Russian Cultural Relations," *Byzantion*, 53 (1983), 507–37 [repr. *Byzantium–Rus'–Russia: Studies in the Translation of Christian Culture* (Aldershot, 2002), II], who points out that in the Kievan period there is no evidence for the liturgical commemoration of the emperor in Russia.

⁴ Such an act is characterized by Obolensky as "a revolt against the basic tenet of Byzantine political philosophy." See Dimitri Obolensky, "Some Notes Concerning a Byzantine Portrait of John VIII Palaeologus," *Eastern Churches Review*, IV (1972), 146 [repr. *The Byzantine Inheritance of Eastern Europe* (Aldershot, 1982), X].

⁵ Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium," 167, opens with Patriarch Anthony's letter and notes this parallelism.

⁶ George Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 35(84) (1956), 9. This discrepancy between political reality and self-representation in the later Byzantine period is described by Nicolas Oikonomides in Shepard and Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 74, as a "constant opposition between a glorified past on the one hand and the cold facts of the time on the other."

terrestrial power. It begins with an examination of select aspects of imperial ritual, which has long been understood as key to the performance of the emperor's sovereignty by scholars such as Treitinger and, more recently, Dagron.⁷ It then turns to the construction of dynastic ties through marriage, before, finally, turning these broader questions to a close reading of the early fifteenth-century liturgical vestment known as the major *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, currently housed in the Kremlin Museum in Moscow.

Twenty years after the patriarch's letter, a marital alliance was arranged for Manuel II's son, the future John VIII, and Dmitrievič's daughter, Anna. The marriage was in all likelihood negotiated by Metropolitan Photios, the senior-ranking member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Kiev and all of Russia appointed directly by the patriarch of Constantinople. At some point after the marriage, the lavish *sakkos* was dispatched to Moscow to be worn by the Metropolitan. This vestment is embroidered not only with an extensive iconographic program of salvation but also with contemporary portraits of the Metropolitan, the heir to the Byzantine throne, his Muscovite bride, and her parents (Figures 5.2–5.5). The overall salvific program of the *sakkos* is complicated by the inclusion of these contemporary rulers and also by local histories and hagiographies.

This lavish gift presents a densely layered message of sacro-imperial authority centered in Constantinople in both ecclesiastical and dynastic terms in an era of the capital's diminished political sway. The constriction of the emperor's domain, this chapter ultimately argues, forced emperors of the late Byzantine period to construct other means of manifesting power, means that may not have *reflected* the reality of the situation but which, ideally, would *compensate* for it. This distinction is crucial. With support failing to materialize after Manuel's long diplomatic mission in Western Europe, he commissioned the images for the copy of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* to be sent to Paris (Figures 4.3–4.4). At the same time, the royal Muscovite and Palaiologan houses were united through marriage, and the major *sakkos* was sent to Moscow to be worn by Metropolitan Photios (Figures 5.2–5.3). These gifts did not reflect the current state of social relations, but were offered in an attempt to establish and augment allegiances. Both the *Corpus Dionysiaca* and the major *sakkos* drew upon longstanding pre-existing relationships and should be seen as part of ongoing diplomatic dialogues. In the case of the copy of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite, as we saw in Chapter 4, the dialogue centered on hagiographic and Neoplatonic

⁷ Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*; and Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*.

genealogy. In the case of the major *sakkos*, to which we will turn shortly, the dialogue concerned the intertwined imperial dynastic and ecclesiastical ties between Moscow and Constantinople. In both instances, Constantinople, though beleaguered, battered, and broken, still constituted itself as the center and source of sacro-imperial authority.

Imperial ritual and *evergetism*

Gilbert Dagron has cogently elaborated the ideological stakes of Byzantine imperial ceremonial. For Dagron, the emperor's procession to the Great Church and entrance with the patriarch constituted an especially potent articulation of and a critical threshold for delimiting that authority. In relation to Dagron's understanding of the dual-revelatory power of imperial ceremonial, Chapter 2 considered the Great Church's vestibule and narthex imagery in relation to this entrance with regard to issues of legitimation surrounding the first Palaiologan emperor and his public bronze monument erected in front of the Church of the Holy Apostles. The present discussion now turns to the terminus of the celebration, the imperial recession or leave-taking ceremony, where the emperor exits the body of the church upon the conclusion of the liturgy. Recall that at the commencement of the service, the emperor's crown was removed at the "Beautiful Doors" before he processed through the "Imperial Doors" with the patriarch. The crown was returned to the emperor at the conclusion of the ceremonies in conjunction with a series of ritual exchanges and these re-inscribe the contours of the imperial office.⁸

The middle Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies* relates the protocol for these ritual actions. At the end of the service, the patriarch joins the emperor, who is installed in his *metatorion* sharing a meal with his officials.⁹ After an embrace, the two, followed by their entourages, proceed to the small door on the south side of the eastern wall of the Great Church leading onto the shrine of the Holy Well, which held a relic of the well where Christ met

⁸ The temporary suspension of the emperor's crown, in Dagron's eloquent words (*Emperor and Priest*, 215), indicates that "all signs of sovereignty were abandoned in the house of the King of kings."

⁹ On the prescriptive nature of this text, see note 34 in the Introduction. Majeska, "The Emperor in His Church," 9, also traces the leave-taking ceremony. On the *metatorion*, see Anthony Cutler, "Metatorion" in the *ODB* (with bibliography); Mathews, *Early Churches*, 132–3; and John Francis Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Rome, 1987), 177–8.

the Samaritan woman.¹⁰ Here at the southeast side of the sacred edifice, the emperor performs imperial largesse. Taking bags of coinage from his officials, the emperor distributes gold from his own hand to representatives of the church, and to the poor. Members of each group were called to receive their gift in order by the official known as the *arguros*. Following this public performance of generosity, the emperor and the patriarch enact a final ritual exchange. The patriarch crowns the emperor with the crown taken off during his entrance at the “Beautiful Doors” and gives him the *euologias* of consecrated bread and perfumed oil. In return, the emperor gives the patriarch a monetary offering, the *apokombion* or heavy purse of coinage for distribution.¹¹

A sequential view of these events indicates how the emperor’s authority is inscribed through gift exchange. The emperor first publicly displays largesse to different ranks of society in a performance of *evergetism* with deep historical roots.¹² He is then rewarded by the patriarch with the ultimate symbol of terrestrial authority (the crown) and with blessings (what the layperson receives at the conclusion of the liturgy). The emperor then offers his monetary gift in return to the patriarch before a final embrace and departure. Sacred, imperial, and monetary gifts are offered directly from the emperor’s or the patriarch’s hand. The emperor gives coinage and the patriarch dispenses symbols of authority (crown) and faith (blessings). The series of ritual actions negotiate through gestures of gift exchange the mutual dependence of imperial and sacerdotal authority. This concluding ritual exchange establishes a kind of contract between the emperor and the patriarch. With the return of his crown, the emperor is inscribed as benefactor and protector of the Great Church and the Empire.¹³

¹⁰ *Book of Ceremonies*, Chapter I in Vogt, *Le Livre des cérémonies*, 14ff. On the Holy Well, see Mango, *Brazen House*, 60–72 and 90f.; R. Guiland, “Étude sur Constantinople byzantine: le Puits-Sacré,” *JÖBG*, 5 (1956), 35–40; Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 223–326; Vogt, *Le Livre des cérémonies. Commentary I*: 63–4; Mathews, *Early Churches*, 93–4.

¹¹ Again, the name derives from the knot (*kombos*) with which the sack was tied. See note 12 in the Introduction.

¹² The classic study of *evergetism* is Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (London, 1990 [1976]). A more recent treatment is Arjan Zuiderhoek, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire: Citizens, Elites and Benefactors in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹³ Majeska, “The Emperor in His Church,” 9, proposes that this ritual exchange elucidates the emperor’s role as lay patron of the church more clearly than any other ceremonial moment: the patriarch crowns the emperor “anew as he leaves the church building for the world where he wears the crown.”

The distribution of largesse was a crucial element of this exchange and was also of central import to the emperor's coronation, which was woven into the liturgical cycle of the Great Church. In general the emperor entered and exited the Great Church in the same manner as he would on major feast days for his coronation.¹⁴ Passing through the "Imperial Doors," surmounted by the enigmatic mosaic of imperial *proskynesis* above (Figure 2.17), the emperor and patriarch process together to the limit of the sanctuary to pray then ascend the ambo. Following a litany and prayers, the patriarch crowns the emperor to the sound of the familiar ritual acclamations of "Holy, holy, holy" and "Many years to you, great *basileus* and *autokrator*" (Ἅγιος, Ἅγιος, Ἅγιος and Ὁ δεῖνα μεγάλου βασιλέως καὶ αὐτοκράτορος πολλά τὰ ἔτη).¹⁵ The newly crowned emperor then retires to the metatorion, where he receives dignitaries (τὰ ἀξιώματα) who, in prescribed order of precedence, fall to the ground and kiss his knees.

In contrast to middle Byzantine ceremonial sources like the *Book of Ceremonies*, coronation accounts in the Palaiologan period express a further ritual elaboration surrounding the elevation of an emperor. They specify that he was raised on shield, acclaimed, and anointed, and also that he publicly professed his Orthodox faith.¹⁶ Texts such as the mid-fourteenth-century Pseudo-Kodinos also expand upon the rituals of generosity surrounding the emperor's coronation. Pseudo-Kodinos's chapter on imperial coronation (Περὶ στεφνηφορίας βασιλέως) indicates that imperial monetary distribution was performed both before and after his coronation. After his

¹⁴ There is a substantial body of literature on imperial coronation. See the *Book of Ceremonies*, Chapter 47 (38) in Vogt, *Le Livre des cérémonies*, II: 6–10 plus commentary on vol. II, 1–3; and Jacques Goar (ed.), *Euchologion, sive Rituale Graecorum* (Venice, 1730, repr. Graz, 1960), 726–30. See also F. Brightman, "Byzantine Imperial Coronations," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 2 (1901), 359–92; C. N. Tsirpanlis, "The Imperial Coronation and Theory in 'De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae' of Constantine VII Porphyrogennitus," *Κληρονομία*, 4 (1972), 63–91; M. Arranz, "Couronnement royal et autres promotions de cour. Les sacrements de l'institution de l'ancien Euchologe constantinopolitain," *OCP*, 56 (1990), 83–133; and P. Yannopoulos, "Le couronnement de l'empereur à Byzance: rituel et fond institutionnel," *Byzantion*, 61(1) (1991), 71–92.

¹⁵ Vogt, *Le Livre des cérémonies*, Chapter 47 (38): 11–13. In another description, the patriarch concludes the coronation by intoning "Worthy!" which is echoed by the congregation three times.

¹⁶ The two main sources are Kantakouzenos and Pseudo-Kodinos. On the relationship between these two texts, see Niels Gaul, "The Partridge's Purple Stockings: Observations on the Historical, Literary and Manuscript Context of Pseudo-Kodinos' Handbook on Court Ceremonial" in Michael Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin and New York, 2007), 73–85.

profession of faith, but before his coronation proper, the emperor goes to the “Thomaïtis” triklinos and looks toward the Augustaion, the courtyard on the south side of the church, where a crowd and army are assembled (and where Justinian’s celebrated bronze equestrian monument stood, as noted in Chapter 2).¹⁷ The text relates that in front of the emperor, a senator selected by the emperor throws *apokombia* to the crowd from the top of the stairs of the Augustaion. The text makes clear that largesse at this point is distributed by a surrogate, through the emperor’s official, but in view of the emperor.¹⁸ The text also enumerates the contents of the *apokombia*: within each cut piece of cloth are three *nomismata* of gold, silver, and copper.¹⁹

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy and the coronation, Pseudo-Kodinos relates that an imperial *prokypsis* is performed. The imperial family ascends a stage concealed by curtains, which are drawn aside strategically – dramatically and momentarily – to reveal the immobile emperor and his family as an imperial *tableau vivant*.²⁰ While imperial largesse remains a central component of the ritual construction of the imperial ideal, the *prokypsis* ceremony is relatively new. Despite the fact that most of our sources for it are Palaiologan in date, the ritual itself goes back to the twelfth century, and its cultivation under Michael VIII in the thirteenth century may have been part of his agenda of ceremonial revival and renewal, as discussed in Chapter 1.²¹ This ritualized imperial epiphany was performed at Christmas, Easter, and Palm Sunday, as well as imperial coronations, and it also constitutes a prominent feature in descriptions of marriages and the arrival of brides.²²

Following the *prokypsis*, the crowned emperor and empress ride horses back to the palace while all others proceed on foot. Both the *prokypsis* and the procession serve to proclaim visually the new imperial status of the emperor. The next day, a new *apokombia* distribution is staged at the palace. In a courtyard, the emperor takes coins from the *vestiarion*, who

¹⁷ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 388:1–5. On the Augustaion, see Mango, *Brazen House*, 42–7, 56–60, and 174–9. See also R. Guiland, “Le Thomaïtes et le Patriarcat,” *JÖBG*, 5 (1956), 29–40; and Raymond Janin, “Le palais patriarcal de Constantinople Byzantine,” *REB*, 20 (1962), 144–9.

¹⁸ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 255:1–2.

¹⁹ Of course, by this time, gold coinage had ceased to be struck, as noted in Chapter 3. Regardless of denomination, the point remains the same: the emperor’s image imprinted on coinage was distributed in front of the living emperor. See note 25 below.

²⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 29.

²¹ Recall, as noted in Chapter 1, that many of Holobolos’s orations for Michael VIII were written to accompany the *prokypsis*.

²² John VI Kantakouzenos staged a *prokypsis* for his daughter’s marriage to Orhan in 1347, on which see Bryer, “Greek Historians on the Turks,” 478–9, 482–4.

holds in his robe a large number of bulk gold *nomismata*, and gives them to those assembled.²³ While the first instance of ritual gift-giving specified the distribution of coinage from the court official but in view of the emperor, here the emperor takes the coins from the official and distributes them himself. The point is that the emperor's elevation in status is articulated by his shift in agency with regard to *evergetism*. Before his coronation proper, he was visually associated with largesse, but its distribution was through a surrogate, while after his coronation, coins are dispersed from his own hand. Moreover, the author explicates the rationale for the generosity: it was "the emperor's desire that all the archons, their sons, soldiers, and the people celebrate with him, eating and drinking at the expense of the Emperor."²⁴ Here, giving served to further the celebration and memorialization of his new status as emperor.

In these different accounts of imperial coronation, the emperor is visually associated with the distribution of largesse, whether from his own hand or visually aligned with a proxy distributor. The underlying ritual of *evergetism* is recognizable in both periods, whether his offering is individually distributed wrapped *apokombia* or loose coinage scattered en masse. In the middle Byzantine account, the gift exchange situated at the shrine of the Holy Well encapsulates in concrete terms the mutual dependence of the emperor and the patriarch. In the later Byzantine period, gift-giving provides the frame for Pseudo-Kodinos's account, in which ritual distribution inaugurates and concludes the emperor's changing of status.²⁵ The general outline of the ritual action remains consistent in both: the emperor, following his solemn investiture by the patriarch, distributes largesse. These rituals of munificence may be traced back to imperial Rome, but the Palaiologan accounts attest to a key innovation: *apokombia* distribution is linked to the *prokypsis*. The emperor's image – itself ritualized as an immobile still-life tableau – is joined to the performative display of gift-giving where the gift

²³ This is designated *apokombia* even though bulk coinage is specified (rather than prepared pouches or purses of coinage tied with a knot).

²⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 271.

²⁵ The texts also specify the contents of the *apokombia*. While by the mid-fourteenth century, gold coinage ceased to be struck, the anonymous Greek text from the end of the century still specifies gold in addition to silver and copper. Regardless of this enumeration, which may have simply repeated earlier textual material, it is doubtful that gold coinage was distributed for Manuel's coronation. The Russian account, which will be discussed in greater detail below, specifies mere silver *staurata* for the 1392 coronation. Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 435, suggests that the *apokombia* were much reduced in amount by the late fourteenth century and that silver *staurata* alone were distributed "in keeping with the sad financial plight of the empire." In any event, the imperial ceremonial gestures and traditions continue even if there is a shift in content (from gold to silver).

is the coin bearing the imperial effigy. In other words, we see here the ceremonial juxtaposition of the stilled majestic living emperor and his image impressed and distributed in gold.

The Russian description of Manuel II's coronation in 1392 presents a slightly different picture from the ceremonial handbooks.²⁶ Ignatius of Smolensk, who was in Constantinople on an ecclesiastical mission, witnessed the ceremony first hand.²⁷ His text is less concerned with timeless ritual negotiations of authority and more with what he understood of the particular ceremonial episode he witnessed. With the move from prescriptive sources to a descriptive account of imperial ritual, we encounter a greater degree of specificity.

According to Ignatius, the coronation of Manuel Palaiologos and Helena Dragaš by Patriarch Anthony took place in Hagia Sophia on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. The readings selected for the coronation, again as stressed in the Introduction to Part II, emphasized Manuel's rightful authority in the face of faction.²⁸ Attended by Frankish, Genoese, and Venetian representatives, each visually marked by dress and emblem, Ignatius conveys a picture of majesty and luxury, lingering over marvelous vestments adorned with gold and pearls, brocades of silk white as snow and of velvets in purple and cerise. The imperial entourage, including soldiers, standard bearers, and heralds, entered through the "Imperial Doors" and processed to the imperial dais on the south side of the nave. The Russian author exaggerates the slow pace to emphasize the solemnity of the procession and the majestic visual effect of the emperor's entrance.²⁹ The coronation proper took place

²⁶ He had been crowned before in 1373 as co-emperor. Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 418 n. 12, points out that his initial coronation was not comparable to Michael VIII's 1259 coronation as co-emperor in that Michael's did not include the right of succession. Still, it is noteworthy that both Palaiologan emperors, and Kantakouzenos too, followed their initial coronations with full ceremonial coronations by the patriarch in Hagia Sophia. See also Peter Schreiner, "Hochzeit und Krönung Kaiser Manuels II. im Jahre 1392," *BZ*, 60 (1967), 74–5. On the politics involved in the marriage of Manuel II and Helena Dragaš of Serbia and the wedding itself, see Barker, *Manuel II*, 99–104; Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 298; Schreiner, "Hochzeit," 70–85; Stephen Reinert, "What the Genoese Cast upon Helena Dragash's Head: Coins, Not Confecti," *ByzF*, 20 (1994), 235–46; Reinert, "Political Dimensions," 291–303; and Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 416–36.

²⁷ As Majeska points out in *Russian Travelers*, 50, Ignatius of Smolensk's description is the only eye-witness-account of a Byzantine coronation in the Palaiologan period.

²⁸ As discussed in the Introduction to Part II, drawing on Reinert, "What the Genoese Cast," 291–303.

²⁹ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 416–36. In a particularly moralizing tone, Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 298, reads the Russian deacon as a duped fool from afar, taken in by the pageantry of Byzantine imperial ceremonial, which was, in truth, nothing more than a masquerade. Ignatius "obviously did not feel a pervading sense of doom or wonder whether, in the circumstances,

at the ambo at the moment of the Divine Liturgy, known as the “Little Entrance” (*mikra eisodos*).³⁰ The patriarch placed the crown on the head of the emperor, who then, in turn, stepped down and placed a crown on the empress’s head.³¹

Although both earlier and contemporaneous sources stress *evergetism* at the conclusion of the service, characterizing the emperor emphatically as the giver of the coinage either from his own hand or through an appointed surrogate, Ignatius describes something altogether different: he claims that at the conclusion of his coronation, the emperor was showered with coins. When the emperor left the church, instead of granting largesse, as in all Byzantine sources, the Russian deacon asserts that: “As [the emperor] left the church, he was showered with *staurata*, which all the people tried to grab with their hands.”³²

With this sentence, the Russian account inverts the traditional rituals of imperial *evergetism*. The newly crowned emperor is described as the object of donation, not the agent; he is showered with coins rather than distributing them ceremonially. At the same time, Ignatius’s text still positions the emperor as an instrument of *evergetism*, even if accidentally. The coins flung at the emperor find themselves in the hands of those attending the imperial spectacle, who, Ignatius claims, rush to grab them. Even placed in the

the masquerade of an imperial coronation was justified.” The emperor and patriarch, he continues, “were set upon putting up a brave show.”

³⁰ Ignatius does not mention that Manuel was anointed by the patriarch. Nor does he mention the pre-coronation rituals, such as raising on a shield. See Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 419–20, who explains that such rituals would have been part of his 1374 coronation and thus need not have been repeated. The omission of the unction detail, however, is more problematic, as by the Palaiologan period, it had assumed primary importance. The Russian traveler, according to Majeska, probably did not understand this part of the ritual and hence did not mention it. See also Reinert, “Political Dimensions,” 293.

³¹ This process is in agreement with middle Byzantine sources. The *Book of Ceremonies* explains that if a son or wife is to be crowned, the patriarch hands the crown to the emperor to place on their heads. Such a practice illustrates quite clearly the Dionysian underpinnings of imperial ritual, itself modeled on ecclesiastical ritual. The coronation of junior partners exemplifies the Dionysian conception of hierarchy and internal mediation where the transmission of authority from the patriarch is mediated through the emperor.

³² Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 112–13. The last phrase is bracketed in Schreiner’s translation of the text; see “Hochzeit,” 85. In terms of ritual parallels, Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 435 n. 131, notes that in Venice newly installed Doges threw coinage to the people after the “church service of installation.” In Russia the newly crowned tsar was showered with coinage in a ritual whose genesis may be traced to Ignatius’s description. See note 38 below on this point. Reinert, “What the Genoese Cast,” 245 n. 33, offers an Ottoman parallel where the coinage was offered to Beyezid at his marriage in 1381/2 and then his father Murad redistributed some of these to the ulema and needy, and kept some for himself. Note that *staurata* are specified for this ritual scattering of coins, on which see Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 537–9; and Grierson, *DOC V/1*, 213–23.

passive role of the exchange, the emperor remains the occasion and source of munificence, only not of his own agency.

Because of the unprecedented and unexpected nature of such an inversion, George Majeska has read this aspect of Ignatius's description as a misunderstanding of the Byzantine convention of distributing *apokombia* as largesse.³³ One other instance of showering the emperor with coinage, however, is attested and this complicates the picture. Regarding the arrival of the emperor's Serbian-born bride, an account book of Pera's Genoese community specifies expenses for things that were to be cast over her head upon her *adventus*. Stephen Reinert has clarified the nature of these things. Rather than *confecti* to celebrate the arrival of an imperial bride, Helena was to be showered with coins, probably *staurata*.³⁴ Such a ritual is absent from Greek descriptions of and prescriptions for the ceremonial arrival of imperial brides such as that of Pseudo-Kodinos, which preserves the most detailed information about a foreign bride's arrival in the imperial city.³⁵

The fact that the Russian description of Manuel's coronation and the Genoese notation regarding Helena's *adventus* both include the showering with coins suggests the veracity of such a ceremony – it suggests, in other words, that the texts describe an actual ceremony, and are not merely a misunderstanding of Byzantine imperial ritual on the part of the foreigners.³⁶ The coin scattering included in both the Genoese account of the empress's arrival in Constantinople and the Russian account of the emperor's coronation inverts the typical expectation of imperial *evergetism*³⁷ and also raises important questions about the relationship of imperial munificence, authority, and ritual within the larger Byzantine *oikoumene*. Majeska points out that the ritual of scattering coins like *confecti* became a tradition for the coronation of a new tsar in Moscow. He has shown that later Russian coronation rituals were modeled closely not only on Byzantine models in

³³ His position, in other words, is that because Ignatius's description does not match the Byzantine sources, he must have misunderstood what he saw (i.e., Ignatius got it wrong).

³⁴ "Pro Iacobo de Terdona domicelo domini Potestatis, et sunt qui proiecti fuerunt super capud domine Imperatricis in eius adventu que fecit in Constantinopoli." Cf. Barker, *Manuel II*, 102. See also Schreiner, "Hochzeit," 72–3. Pseudo-Kodinos describes Helena's arrival in Constantinople on February 7–8, 1392.

³⁵ Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 286–7. Macrides's much-anticipated forthcoming commentary on Pseudo-Kodinos is sure to shed light on these issues.

³⁶ Reinert, "What the Genoese Cast," 245, believes that the scattering of *staurata* for a bride's arrival was a recent ceremonial introduction.

³⁷ Reinert (*ibid.*, 246) notes that both instances "constitute an inversion of an ancient tradition whereby the emperor distributed largesse to the people" (citing Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 435–6).

general but on Ignatius's coronation description in particular.³⁸ Whether or not Ignatius understood Byzantine imperial ritual gift-giving and construed it instead as gift-receiving, his version of events became the inspiration for the coronation of tsars in Russia well after the fall of Constantinople, when Byzantium existed in faith alone as the Orthodox patriarchate.

On marriage: Palaiologan dynastic politics

Both the Genoese notation and the Russian description suggest an inversion of imperial *evergetism*, where the ritual showering of coinage is directed at or upon the imperial bride at her arrival in Constantinople and the emperor at the conclusion of his coronation. The emperor's marriage and his coronation are thus ritually linked. The emperor himself stresses the centrality of the bond of marriage to empire most explicitly in his *Dialogue on Marriage* (*Περὶ γάμου*), a treatise very much rooted in the dynastic politics of his time. Manuel sent a copy of this treatise to Demetrios Kydones, describing it in the accompanying letter as "some writing to the father of writing."³⁹ Manuel also acknowledges that his offering, the *Dialogue*, is prompted by the harsh circumstances around him: "The dangers now threatening us have spurred us on and compelled us to write." The *Dialogue*, far from being a mere rhetorical exercise devoid of political import, instead represents his attempt to redefine imperial rule in turbulent times.⁴⁰

³⁸ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 52 and 436, citing his earlier article, "The Moscow Coronation of 1498 Reconsidered," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 26 (1978), 353–61. In contextualizing the 1498 Russia coronation, Majeska makes clear that the adoption of the scattering of coinage (described in the Russian account of a Byzantine coronation) was exceptional and was employed to bolster the profound change in traditional succession. See also M. Arranz, "L'aspect rituel de l'onction des empereurs de Constantinople et de Moscou" in *Roma, Costantinopoli, Mosca: atti del I seminario internazionale di studi storici "Da Roma alla terza Roma" 21–23 aprile 1981* (Naples, 1983), 414–15. On related historiographic issues, see Donald Ostrowski, "'Moscow the Third Rome' as Historical Ghost" in Brooks (ed.), *Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, 170–9; Sergei Bogatyrev, "Reinventing the Russian Monarchy in the 1550s: Ivan the Terrible, the Dynasty, and the Church," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 85(2) (2007), 271–93; and Jonathan Shepard, "Byzantium's Overlapping Circles" in Elizabeth Jeffreys (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London, 21–26 August, 2006* (Aldershot, 2006), I, 15–55. On the adoption of Byzantine imperial ceremonial in the wider medieval context, see Christian Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World* (Cambridge, MA, 2012). My sincere thanks to the author for sharing parts of this work with me in advance of the book's publication.

³⁹ Dennis, *The Letters*, 172–4 (Letter 62: 2). By 1396, Kydones was in northern Italy, then went to Crete, where he died during the winter of 1397/8. We know of no response from the emperor's mentor with regard to the work.

⁴⁰ Florin Leone, "Advice and Praise for the Ruler: Making Political Strategies in Manuel II Palaiologos's *Dialogue on Marriage*" in Savaas Neocleous (ed.), *Papers from the First and*

The text unfolds as a dialogue between Emperor Manuel and his mother, Helena Kantakouzena, on the topic of marriage.⁴¹ Manuel acknowledges that in the past, the two disagreed on the advantage of marriage, but eventually he acquiesced to his mother's wishes to take a wife and start a family.⁴² Throughout the *Dialogue*, he asks his mother to develop more fully her position in favor of marriage.⁴³ The empress defends her position most stridently by emphasizing Manuel's role as exemplar or model statesman and ruler: "you ought to be the model and standard for those who live as citizens under you" (86). As a ruler – and "father-figure and, as it were, educator" – to avoid marriage would prompt his "would-be followers" to imitate him. This poses two problems. The first would be to introduce "a philosophical life to people who do not even let it cross their mind ever to philosophize (whilst their rank calls for other activities)" (88). Second, the stability of his rule would be jeopardized if he were to fail to marry and procreate. The empress thus asks "Will your reign not be whittled away with time if, in fact, no one is going to produce successors?" (88), and, further, "Would it

Second Postgraduate Forums in Byzantine Studies: Sailing to Byzantium (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), 165, claims the text "pertains to real aspects of state administrations with serious implications in late Byzantium," unlike rhetorical works aimed at court entertainment alone.

⁴¹ Athanasios D. Angelou (ed. and trans.), *Manuel Palaiologos, Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage* (Vienna, 1991). All references to the *Dialogue* will be to this edition and translation. Two recent articles have focused on the *Dialogue*: Małgorzata Dąbrowska, "Ought One to Marry? Manuel II Palaiologos' Point of View," *BMGS*, 31(2) (2007), 146–56; and Leonte, "Advice and Praise for the Ruler," 163–80, whose remarks on the dialogic genre are particularly insightful (166–7). He points out that regardless of actual influence, Manuel's *Dialogue* in many ways parallels the writing of Humanists in Western Europe, in particular in its combination of rhetorical art with political matters. See also Reinert, "Political Dimensions," 291–303, who reads passages from the *Dialogue* in conjunction with the coronation readings.

⁴² Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos*, 70: "I was persuaded: I did get married and quickly looked upon children." At the time of the composition, Manuel had married Helena Dragaš and his first son, John, was two years old. By this time his mother, Helena Kantakouzena, had retired to the Kyra Martha convent (and had taken the name Hypomene, Patience) upon the death of John V in 1391. Helena Kantakouzena was an active patron and benefactor of Kydones. See Frances Kianka, "The Letters of Demetrios Kydones to Empress Helena Kantakouzene Palaiologina," *DOP*, 46 (1992), 155–64; and more generally, the *OBD* and *PLP* entries plus Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos*, 39–40.

⁴³ The two disagree about the benefits of marriage and their debate covers rhetorical *topoi* derived from ancient rhetorical handbooks that would have been familiar to the late Byzantine student; see Leonte, "Advice and Praise for the Ruler," 171; and Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos*, 56. The debate unfolds in order of twelve rhetorical topics from the finals of Right, Legitimacy, Honor, Benefit, Possibility, and Consequence, to the circumstantial points of Person, Matter, Time, Place, Manner, and Cause (80). Rather than structuring the *Dialogue*, these rhetorical points only partially guide the discussion – some are dismissed or mentioned only in passing and others are fully developed. Under the topics of Benefit and Time, the empress makes the strongest case in favor of marital union.

not be pointless to rule when there are no more subjects?" (88). While the empress mother firmly insists on marriage because of imperial exemplarity, Manuel maintains that it is not advantageous for rulers to marry in times of trouble.⁴⁴ Marriage itself is not unwise, he concedes, but in difficult times, marriage and family are a source of anxiety. In fact, despite the premise of the treatise, much of the *Dialogue* deals specifically with the problem of marriage in times of trouble.

The emperor's response to the empress, which constitutes the longest speech in the *Dialogue* by far, quickly turns emotional, tense, and dark.⁴⁵ He opposes military matters ("arms and wars") to familial cares, including the education and the upbringing of children, their illnesses and deaths, "mourning for them and following them to their graves" (96: 656–61). "All together," he writes, "you cannot imagine how they disturb and cause depression" (96: 661–2). These concerns affect those men most:

who are at the helm at the point when Time has caused the ship of state to crack, and violent winds have worn the ship's gear thin; they who struggle with the wintry waves and with pirates, looking with apprehension at what lies below the surface of the sea, without even having the security of a harbour somewhere nearby; all this happens during a moonless night, a night darkened by massive clouds, with rainstorms and thunderings one after the other, threats of a deadly hurricane; nothing stands between our times and an experience like that, simply nothing. (96: 662–8)

The ship of state metaphor here conveys a bleak picture of an unmoored and broken vessel under threat from both elemental dangers (hurricanes, winds, rain) and treachery (pirates). The imagery does not convey a sudden storm but a prolonged struggle, winds having worn the gear thin, and a systemic failure of the empire's apparatus, a crack in the ship.

This passage parallels the imagery of another letter written by the emperor to Kydones in 1396 after the Battle of Nikopolis (Letter 31). In both, we find rolling thunderclaps (similarly phrased) and an overarching sense of anxiety conveyed through the evocation of stormy skies and seas.⁴⁶ Unlike

⁴⁴ "If a ruler's affairs are not going well, if his days seem doomed, if everything is against him, if he is being tossed about by anarchy, not by winds – which is the sort of thing that has happened to myself – a person like this, Mother, in my opinion would have done better not to marry and give himself up to endless anxieties, which it would be superfluous to name for those who already know them" (94).

⁴⁵ The speech runs from lines 653 to 724. Leonte, "Advice and Praise for the Ruler," 173–4, points out that it resembles an oration and also notes that marriage itself is not explicitly mentioned in this section.

⁴⁶ Compare the phrasing καὶ τὰς ἀλλεπαλλήλους βροντὰς of Letter 31 (Dennis, *The Letters*, 81: 30) versus καὶ βροντὰς ἀλλεπαλλήλους ἀφιέντων of the *Dialogue* (96: 666). Such close parallels

the passage in the *Dialogue*, however, Letter 31 describes the calamity (the Battle of Nikopolis) as sudden and violent: “just as the sky was bright and clear, the sea appeared calm, and we thought we were sailing along with a good wind and just about inside the harbor – then this terrible disaster struck us with the utmost violence and tore up by the roots all the fairest hopes in the mind.”⁴⁷ In both works, the emperor uses similar phrases and allusions, but to create two different moods. Letter 31 evokes the anger and frustration of the sudden external threat. Just as help was in reach (nearly inside the harbor), this terrible disaster, this thunderbolt, Bayezid, violently struck. The *Dialogue*, on the other hand, describes something slower and deeper, something lurking below. Rather than an unexpected deluge, the ominous language suggests festering and lurking, waiting and watching. While the Nikopolis letter explicitly responds to Ottoman aggressions, the *Dialogue* evokes deep-seated dynastic tensions and alludes to the particular recent threat posed by the emperor’s nephew John (VII).⁴⁸

Although Manuel’s marriage and the prospect of heirs would limit the threat of his nephew, the *Dialogue*, written a few years after his marriage and coronation, suggests continued insecurities. For the most part, the treatise, true to its genre, avoids direct reference to historical people or events, with the notable exception of John (VII), who is discussed at length in acrimonious language. The emperor characterizes him as treacherous, claiming that he delights in intrigue and worse.⁴⁹ In the ship of state speech already mentioned above, John (VII) is to be understood as one of the lurking pirates. From this more veiled reference, Manuel moves on to the heroic realm of Homer. “That man” is described as a caged Cyclops who “breathes murder” and “gnashes his teeth” (98). Manuel all but names John (VII) explicitly: “that despicable person – that is what he is, he is not my nephew – that disastrous threat to the Romaic people.”⁵⁰ The *Dialogue* focuses on internal rather than external threats. The attention Manuel devotes to John far

help us place the original composition of the text to at some point during the initial years of the Ottoman blockade of Constantinople. See Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos*, 21, where a date of 1396 is proposed, albeit hesitantly. In the letter, the sailing into the harbor, evoking the promise of help by the crusaders, is contrasted to Kydones’s sailing away.

⁴⁷ Dennis, *The Letters*, 81–3: 33–7.

⁴⁸ On the context surrounding the struggle for power between Manuel II and his nephew, see the discussion in the Introduction to Part II above.

⁴⁹ “[H]e regularly weaves all kinds of intrigue against you, and everything else he delights in doing, and all he has never failed to be doing against you up till now” (110). This follows the empress’s mention of the civil war (“that gangrene”).

⁵⁰ At this point, he launches into a lengthy tirade against John (VII) with reference to his Ottoman alliances and oath breaking with the passage discussed above in the Introduction to Part II.

exceeds the attention paid to the Ottoman ruler, the source of his empire's ultimate dissolution.⁵¹

The copy of the *Dialogue* sent to Kydones was written sometime around 1394, that is, at the beginning of the Ottoman blockade of Constantinople following the Battle of Nikopolis and two years after Manuel's marriage and the birth of his first son, the future Emperor John VIII Palaiologos. Manuel's 1396 letter to Kydones provides the *terminus ante quem* for the treatise, but the manuscript history suggests that the emperor revised the text extensively over time. A second copy of the *Dialogue* is preserved in a redacted form, probably written between 1415 and 1421.⁵² In the redacted copy, Manuel deleted significant portions of the original version, all of which concern his conflict with his nephew. These revisions indicate the discursive process of the *Dialogue* itself: given that a large part of the empress's argument centers on the idea of the ruler as model and exemplar, it would be particularly inappropriate to include emotional tirades against John (VII), especially after 1403, when the two had reconciled, even if the reconciliation concealed deeper suspicions as suggested in the Palaiologan *pyxis* in Dumbarton Oaks, as noted in the Introduction to Part II (Figure 4.0a–b).⁵³ It has been argued that the redacted text was meant for the emperor's son, John VIII, who is pictured as a child invested with the future authority of an emperor on the *pyxis* and in the Louvre manuscript's family portrait, and also as spouse to his Muscovite bride on the hem of the *sakkos* in Moscow, to which I will turn shortly. Małgorzata Dąbrowska believes that the treatise's revisions were executed in order to erase traces of previous familial tensions and to update the text for the future, in particular to encourage John VIII to marry and produce successors.⁵⁴ This hypothesis gains stronger support

⁵¹ This is also pointed out by Leonte, "Advice and Praise for the Ruler," 176.

⁵² It was revised up until 1417. See Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos*, 21, on the dating. The *terminus post quem* is December 1392, the year of his marriage and the birth of his son. The *Dialogue* only survives in two manuscripts: Paris Gr. 3041 and Vienna phil. Gr. 98. The 1417 date is that of the compilation of the Paris manuscript; the Vienna manuscript dates to sometime between 1417 and the emperor's death in 1421.

⁵³ Such harsh language, as Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos*, 19, points out, would have been especially inappropriate in a text circulating under his own name once the two had reconciled. On the revisions, see Angelou, 18–19. Paris Gr. 3041 contains the full text with the deleted material and Vienna phil. Gr. 98 preserves a copy of the revised text. The two sections dealing with their conflict were deleted (698–721), but the section dealing with what would have happened if Manuel had not married and was forced to acknowledge John VII as his successor were kept (941–97).

⁵⁴ Dąbrowska, "Ought One to Marry?" 155, proposes that the revisions were completed after John VII died in 1408: "the message of the second version remains the same, but the addressee is evident: John VIII, who had five brothers with ambitions similar to his own."

from Florin Leonte, who further points out that the Vienna manuscript in which the revised text survives also includes two other texts dedicated to the emperor's son.⁵⁵

The different iterations of the text speak of two distinct moments and concerns. Manuel originally composed the treatise at the height of his conflict with his nephew, immediately following the disaster at Nikopolis, and during the Ottoman siege of the imperial city he had recently secured and aimed to maintain in part through marriage and a son. The text was revised after he had traveled to Europe, reconciled with his nephew, and faced a new set of urgencies. In the wake of his failed personal diplomatic mission to Western Europe, the marriage for Manuel's son began to assume central importance.

The *Dialogue*, in both its full and redacted versions, emphasizes imperial marriage as key to the stability of the empire: at the conclusion of the text, the emperor concedes victory to his mother's defense. But in lieu of a gold crown as her prize, he offers branches and roses because "Golden crowns are at present in short supply: but everybody is eager for one and there is danger it might be stolen during the ceremony."⁵⁶ The *Dialogue* concludes on this ambivalent note. The logic of marriage is victorious – dynastic politics are deemed critical to safeguard imperial authority – but scarcity, weakness, and threat are evoked in the concluding sentence.

While the emperor's *Dialogue* ultimately advocates marriage as a means of strengthening the imperial line and combating treachery, it does not promote foreign marriage as a Byzantine diplomatic strategy. With its internal, Palaiologan family-centered focus, it is less concerned with foreign marriage. External marital ties, however, were key to concluding peace and establishing networks of allegiance. The emperor and his son both married women from strategically significant foreign courts. Foreign marriage was not unprecedented in earlier Byzantine periods, but it assumed a heightened role in the imperial diplomatic agenda of the Palaiologoi.⁵⁷ The underlying

⁵⁵ These other two texts are the *Praecepts of an Imperial Education* (PG 156: 313–84) and the *Seven Ethico-Political Orations* (PG 156: 385–562).

⁵⁶ The *Dialogue* concludes: "Let the award, then, be of roses and branches, so that the victor may go home with the prize still in his possession" (116).

⁵⁷ See Bryer, "Greek Historians on the Turks"; Gill, "Matrons and Brides of 14th Century Byzantium," *ByzF*, 9 (1985), 39–56; and Sandra Origone, "Marriage Connections between Byzantium and the West in the Age of the Palaiologoi" in B. Arbel (ed.), *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean: Studies in Honour of David Jacoby* (London, 1996), 226–41. An important recent contribution is Antony Eastmond, "Diplomatic Gifts: Women and Art as Imperial Commodities in the 13th Century," in Guillaume Saint-Guillain and Dionysios Stathakopoulos (eds.), *Liquid & Multiple: Individuals & Identities in the Thirteenth-Century*

logic is succinctly outlined by Pachymeres with reference to the marriage of Emperor Andronikos II's daughter Simonis to *kral* Milutin of Serbia in 1299.⁵⁸ In response to this most problematic union – she was five years old at the time and he was forty-six, a fact that appalled contemporaries⁵⁹ – Pachymeres writes: “peace obtains many results that the sword does not achieve, and the treaties which follow upon marriages, because they are very solid and firm, end up accomplishing that which battles and war have never achieved.”⁶⁰ Diplomatic marriage in lieu of war – or often to conclude wars – was a particularly effective mechanism for achieving peace because it established kinship ties and networks of dynastic affiliation across multiple cultures. The logic expressed by Pachymeres seems to have been shared by the imperial administration of the period since, of the eleven final emperors of Byzantium, eight were married to women hailing from lands now known as Italy, Armenia, Germany, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia.

Scholars have often read the increase in foreign diplomatic marriage as a sign of weakness that reflects the economic vulnerability of the state.⁶¹ The phenomenon, however, may be read in a more nuanced light. Dynastic marriages held a central role in the political sphere throughout the medieval world, cementing alliances and binding disparate cultures. As cultural mediators, moreover, Byzantine diplomatic brides represented a major force of artistic patronage and played a key role in the dissemination of Byzantine styles, iconographies, and ideologies. The celebrated marriage of the Byzantine princess Theophano to Otto II in the tenth century and the

Aegean (Paris, 2012), 105–34. I thank the author for sharing this work with me in advance of its publication.

⁵⁸ Apparently, according to Pachymeres, Anna's retinue made it as far as Ohrid, but then, appalled with the “primitive conditions,” returned to Constantinople. See Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques* (Failler, ed.) II, 453–7.

⁵⁹ Stefan Uroš II Milutin was forty-six years old and this was his fourth marriage. The portraits of Simonis and Milutin are preserved at Gračanica, on which see Slobodan Ćurčić, *Gračanica: King Milutin's Church and its Place in Late Byzantine Architecture* (University Park, 1979). Originally Andronikos proposed his sister Eudokia, but she refused, so Simonis was the only option. The proposed marriage was met with resistance, especially in ecclesiastical circles. She returned to Constantinople after Milutin's death in 1321.

⁶⁰ Pachymeres, cited in *BFP*, 20.

⁶¹ See Talbot, *BFP*, 19–21; and Laiou, “Byzantium and the Neighboring Powers: Small-State Policies and Complexities” in Brooks (ed.), *Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, 50ff. On the non-imperial level, we also witness an increase in foreign marriage in this period. For example, only in the late period do we find special military troops composed of children of mixed marriages: the *tourkopouloi* and the *gasmouloi*. Neither group has yet to receive much scholarly attention. The logic of medieval dynastic marriage is succinctly explicated in Chapter 2 of Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 47–70.

profound “byzantinizing” aesthetic that dominates her Ottonian circle is but one well-known example.⁶²

An early Palaiologan icon in the Vatican Treasury evokes the often-conflicting networks that diplomatic marriages aimed to consolidate (Figure 5.1). The icon was commissioned by Helena of Anjou and it conveys the complexity of the confessional and political networks she mediated both on a stylistic and an iconographic level. Byzantine by birth, but related to the Hungarian House of Anjou, Helena married Stefan Uroš I of Serbia (r. 1243–76) in the mid-thirteenth century.⁶³ As the mother of two great rulers of Serbia, Dragutin and Milutin, Helena later became honored as a saint in the Serbian Orthodox Church, although her own confessional allegiances were to Rome. In fact, she commissioned the icon, in all likelihood, as a gift for Pope Nicholas IV.⁶⁴ The imagery of the icon thus triangulates, in varying ways, Byzantium, Serbia, and Rome.

The main portion of the icon, the upper register, comprises large bust-length depictions of St Peter and St Paul identified by Cyrillic characters below an image of Christ in a gesture of blessing. On the smaller lower register, Helena of Anjou is depicted bowing to a western bishop, probably St Nicholas of Bari. Flanking this central scene of personal Roman Catholic devotion demarcated by an arch are her two sons: on the right is Dragutin and on the left is Milutin, the current ruler of Serbia who wed the young Byzantine princess Simonis, the scandalous marriage that prompted the above citation by Pachymeres.⁶⁵ Identified by Slavonic inscriptions and dressed in Byzantine imperial regalia, both sons gesture in supplication toward the saints in the upper register.⁶⁶

The icon as a whole visualizes the entangled allegiances forged by diplomatic marriage. It emphasizes Helena of Anjou’s confessional difference from Constantinople. She is associated with a western saint and her piety is bracketed off from the main pictorial space of the icon by an arch and even a different background of green rather than gold. That difference,

⁶² The cultural impact of this marriage on the German court – from fashion to art to hagiography – has been the subject of much scholarship. See the collection of essays in A. Davids (ed.), *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁶³ Boško Bojović, *L'idéologie monarchique dans les hagio-biographies dynastiques du Moyen Age serbe* (Rome, 1995), 81–4.

⁶⁴ *BFP*, 50.

⁶⁵ Ćurčić, *Gračanica*, 8, notes that Helena did not attend the nuptials, presumably as she was not content with the union.

⁶⁶ Brandie Ratliff, *BFP*, 50–1, reads this as an indication of the subservience of the Serbian Church to the Roman Catholic Church, but this is debatable.



Figure 5.1 Icon with Saints Peter and Paul (above), and Helena of Anjou surrounded by her sons Dragutin and Milutin (below), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican Museums

however, is conveyed in the very idiom of the icon associated so explicitly with Byzantium.⁶⁷ Moreover, she is positioned as mother of the scions of the

⁶⁷ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994), 337, interprets this icon as follows: “the panel is not really an Eastern icon, but merely a product

Serbian royal house, and their ties to Constantinople are visually emphasized through dress and insignia. Again, both Dragutin and Milutin are dressed unmistakably as Byzantine emperors with the imperial *loros* and crown. Royal lineage is here cast in explicit Byzantine visual terms, despite the fact that it was made in Serbia (and, again, it includes Slavonic inscriptions). This icon thus imbricates linguistic, cultural, confessional, political, and dynastic ties. It adopts the ceremonial trappings of imperium and the visual idiom of the icon from Constantinople, but depicts portraits of the Serbian dynastic line and ultimately professes Helena's veneration of a Roman bishop so as to align her confessional status with the West.

The Vatican icon makes evident in clear visual terms the complicated allegiances of the later Byzantine world and the need to think beyond mere dualities of Byzantium and Serbia or Byzantium and the West. In its triangulation of Roman Catholicism (St Peter and St Paul and its status as a gift to the Pope), Byzantine imperium (dress and form), and Serbian dynastic succession, the icon encourages us to move beyond dualities to pluralities and, ultimately, to networks of allegiance.

Wearing allegiances: a liturgical vestment with a political message

Webs of allegiance are woven through marriage and also through gift exchange. Through an explicitly Byzantine visual vocabulary, the major *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios in Moscow, to which the remainder of this chapter is dedicated, evokes a complicated network of allegiances among Constantinople, Moscow, and Lithuania (Figures 5.2–5.3). Read as a gift, the design and extension of the *sakkos* was meant to alleviate rivalries and build alliances. In many respects the motivation behind the extension of the *sakkos* to Moscow is similar to the silk *peplos* sent to Genoa, where the subtle message of imperial sanction and distribution, as argued in Chapter 1, triangulated a series of rivalries in the mid-thirteenth century in an attempt to reclaim Constantinople. The *sakkos* navigates rivalries in the early fifteenth century in an attempt to preserve the imperial Byzantine capital. Unlike the *peplos*, however, the vestment negotiates rivalries through the intermediaries of diplomatic brides and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, specifically the metropolitan.

of Eastern painting that, as a votive gift, took on a Roman profile.” For Kurt Weitzmann, *The St. Peter Icon of Dumbarton Oaks* (Washington DC, 1983), 26, it was created by a Serbian artist “under Byzantine influence.” For me, the icon is less about Byzantine “influence” and more about the expression of complex familial, confessional, cultural, and political allegiances.



Figure 5.2 Front of the “major” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, 1414–17, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-4)

While Manuel II Palaiologos traveled to the West in an attempt to garner support for Constantinople under siege by Bayezid, Byzantine ambassadors simultaneously sought support from Moscow. In around 1400, Byzantine Patriarch Matthew I (1397–1410) sent a letter to Cyprian, the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, instructing him to raise funds for the beleaguered



Figure 5.3 Back of the “major” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, 1414–17, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-4)

capital city.⁶⁸ Previously Moscow had contributed financial support to Constantinople, for example, when one of the apses of Hagia Sophia was in

⁶⁸ Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et diplomata* II, 361; Dimitri Obolensky, “A Byzantine Grand Embassy to Russia in 1400,” *BMGS*, 4 (1979), 123–32 [repr. Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Inheritance of Eastern Europe* (Aldershot, 1982), XII]; and Barker, *Manuel II*, 202–4.

need of repair in 1346.⁶⁹ The Great Church, after all, constituted the spiritual center of Orthodoxy and the physical manifestation of sacerdotal authority. It was the ceremonial home of the patriarch, who was responsible for approving the appointment of metropolitans for the entire Orthodox *oikoumene*, and also the setting for the performance of sacro-imperial authority such as coronations, which, again, so impressed foreign visitors like Ignatius of Smolensk. The patriarch's letter assures Metropolitan Cyprian that the emperor and his nephew had reconciled following their protracted power struggle and that Constantinople would be secure while Manuel traveled to France. The patriarch further instructs the metropolitan to raise funds for the beleaguered capital. He specifically emphasizes that giving is of the highest priority: "assure them that giving for the sake of guarding the holy city is better than works of charity and alms to the poor and ransoming captives."⁷⁰ The imperial city is thus placed above alms giving and other acts of Christian generosity: "For this holy City is the pride, the support, the sanctification and the glory of Christians in the whole inhabited world." Given the historical circumstances surrounding the letter, this sense of urgency is understandable. Six years into the Ottoman siege of the imperial capital, the emperor of the Romans, who is characterized as distinct and exceptional according to Patriarch Anthony's 1393 letter to the Muscovite ruler, was traveling in person as a supplicant of western powers. The metropolitan, here portrayed as a potential "collecting agent" for the imperial administration by Dimitri Obolensky,⁷¹ was instructed to embark on a major fundraising campaign. Despite constricted realities, Constantinople still constituted the symbolic center of the *oikoumene* in the eyes of its ecclesiasts.

Even after the sacro-imperial city had been spared by the *thauma* of the Virgin in 1402 (or Timur and the Battle of Ankara), circumstances remained dire for the imperial capital. With western support seeming ever elusive, the wider Orthodox *oikoumene* figured prominently in the emperor's diplomatic agenda. Ties to Moscow, which, it was hoped, would secure

⁶⁹ Apparently in 1347 John VI Kantakouzenos initially diverted the Muscovite funds to pay Orhan. Then, at the urging of the patriarch, he pursued repairs of the main dome (with master builders Astras and Italian Giovanni Peralta). See Kidonopoulos, "The Urban Physiognomy," 109. In 1398 the Muscovite government sent further funds to Manuel II. See Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 80; Dimitri Obolensky, "Byzantium and Russia in the Late Middle Ages" in J. Hale, R. Highfield and B. Smalley (eds.), *Europe in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1965), 249.

⁷⁰ Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et diplomata* II, 361; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 258; Obolensky, "A Byzantine Grand Embassy," 131; and Barker, *Manuel II*, 203.

⁷¹ Obolensky, "A Byzantine Grand Embassy," 125.

tangible support, could be strengthened through ecclesiastical networks, as suggested by fundraising requests from the patriarch to the metropolitan, and also through marriage. Both these strategies are mapped out on the extravagant liturgical vestment sent to Moscow in the early fifteenth century. Now housed in the Kremlin Museum, it is known as the “major” *sakkos* of the Metropolitan Photios, as it was commissioned for the metropolitan who had been appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople in 1408 as Metropolitan Cyprian’s successor (Figures 5.2–5.3).⁷² As a deluxe liturgical garment, the major *sakkos* delineates the intended wearer’s rank within the sacerdotal hierarchy; it also links the church in Moscow to Constantinople and intertwines ecclesiastical politics with Palaiologan dynastic aims and diplomatic agendas.

The extravagance of the *sakkos* – its overwhelming surfeit of visual material heavy with gold and silver thread, now further adorned with pearls – stands in sharp contrast to the patriarch’s letter to Metropolitan Cyprian seeking financial assistance. In order to make sense of the extension of such excessive luxuriousness within the context of political urgency and economic scarcity, we must understand the *sakkos* as a gift and thus read its imagery within the register of the optative, where expected gestures of reciprocity are implicit. In its celebration of sacro-imperial Constantinople, the visual program of the *sakkos* constitutes a visual statement of Orthodoxy with an explicit contemporary political message. This political dimension distinguishes it from other surviving liturgical vestments of the period. Contemporary portraits of secular and sacerdotal authority are positioned along the lower hem of its front beside hagiographic figures of particular local relevance. Manuel’s son, John Palaiologos, is represented prominently in what might be described as a family portrait. Rather than being pictured at his father’s side as in the manuscript sent to Paris, John is portrayed on this vestment next to Anna, his first wife, and her parents, Vasily I Dmitrievich and Sophia Vitovtovna. The effigies of these

⁷² The “major” *sakkos* of Photios (Kremlin Museum inv. no. TK-4) was acquired in 1920 from the patriarchal vestry. On the “major” *sakkos*, see Alice Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums* (New York, 1977), 329; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 95–7; Elisabeth Piltz, *Trois sakkoi byzantins: Analyse iconographique* (Uppsala, 1976); and Natalia Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery: Byzantium, Balkans, Russia* (Moscow, 1991), 44–50 (with bibliography). Woodfin’s recent work on Byzantine liturgical textiles includes the major *sakkos* as well: Woodfin, “Liturgical Textiles,” *BFP*, 298; Warren Woodfin, “The Dissemination of Byzantine Embroidered Vestments in the Slavonic World to A.D. 1500” in *Medieval Christian Europe: East and West. Tradition, Values, Communications* (Sofia, 2002), 690–1; and, most recently, Warren Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford, 2012), 60–4, 122–8, 215–20.

contemporary royal figures are set apart from the rest of the iconographic program, which fully covers the vestment, but at the same time the imagery of the hem, it will be argued, constitutes the organizing principle of the *sakkos* as a whole.

A comparison of John's portrait on the embroidered vestment with his representation on the second folio of the Louvre manuscript examined in the previous chapter offers initial clues to the overall message of the *sakkos*'s design and the imperial diplomatic agenda it indexes (Figures 4.4 and 5.4). In both, he is shown beardless standing upon royal crimson *suppedion*. He is dressed in ceremonial imperial garb, including the crown and jeweled *loros*, the end of which is folded over his left arm. He is further distinguished by a halo and he carries a staff in one hand and *akakia* in the other. The only significant difference between the two depictions in terms of dress and attribute is the color of his tunic, which is black in the manuscript and red on the *sakkos*. The manuscript image portrays John as a child at his father's side – this is conveyed not only by his stature and height, but the artist has also rendered his face more youthful. By contrast, John is depicted unmistakably as an adult when positioned alongside his bride on the embroidered vestment.⁷³ His facial features do not resemble a child and he is rendered the same scale as the other figures on the *sakkos*. These formal distinctions are indicative of the context of each of these sumptuous works of art. Where John appears alongside his father in the book sent to Paris, his junior status is emphasized and his rank is prescribed within a hierarchy informed by Dionysian thought that the imperial Palaiologan family portrait prefaces. On the *sakkos* sent to the metropolitan in Moscow, however, John is the only imperial figure represented and thus is the senior-ranking imperial representative of Constantinople.

The inscriptions also underscore this distinction. The images of John simultaneously sent to Paris and Moscow both identify him as *basileus*, which corresponds to his dress and regalia. As discussed in Chapter 4, the conclusion of his inscription in the manuscript portrait indicates that he is the emperor's son (O YIOC AYTOY), thereby explicitly linking him to Manuel and also specifying his position as dependent upon his father. Moreover, it does not include his family name, as Manuel's inscription outlines the

⁷³ More "naturalistic" details are not evident in the embroidered depiction, surely in part due to the constraints of the medium. While the painter was able to model colors to create depth and likeness – the "naturalism" of the Louvre miniature's depiction of the emperor in particular is commented upon by most scholars – embroidery poses more challenges. See Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 50, on technique for the flesh-tones. On the naturalism of the Louvre portrait, see Grabar, "Des peintures byzantines de 1408," 1357.



Figure 5.4 Detail of John Palaiologos, hem of the front of the “major” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, 1414–17, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-4)

patronymics more fully.⁷⁴ On the *sakkos*, however, John’s inscription concludes with his family name, Palaiologos, without reference to his father:

⁷⁴ ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΗ)C ΕΝ / ΧΩ ΤΩ ΘΩ ΠΙCΤΟC / ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC / Ο ΥΙΟC ΑΥΤΟΥ. Again, Chapter 4 treated the inscriptions in the Louvre family portrait in light of the Dionysian conception of internal mediation where the rank of the sons is prescribed in relation to Manuel II.

Ἰω(άννης) ἐν Χ(ριστῷ) τῷ θ(εῷ) πιστὸς βασιλεὺς ὁ Παλεολόγος [*sic*].⁷⁵ These subtle changes in inscription underscore the different diplomatic strategies surrounding each imperial effigy.⁷⁶ In the Louvre manuscript, John is positioned within a precise temporal sequence of Palaiologan rulers, with his authority mediated by his father, the current ruler of Byzantium, who had recently visited Paris in person. On the *sakkos*, John is the only male member of the imperial Byzantine family present – again, he is the sole representative of the imperial Palaiologoi and his image is embroidered on a vestment destined for Moscow in conjunction with his marriage to the Muscovite princess. As such, his image triangulates relations with his new family and their land, which was ministered by the wearer of the *sakkos*, the Metropolitan Photios. Bearing in mind this triangulation, the remainder of this chapter turns to the political message of the imperial portraits along the hem of the piece within the context of the larger liturgical and salvific cycle. It then considers the implications of including this politically charged content on a vestment made in Constantinople and sent to Moscow to be worn by the metropolitan, the spiritual intermediary appointed by the patriarch.

Vested privilege

The major *sakkos* of Photios is distinguished from the other extant liturgical vestments by virtue of the contemporary royal portraits embroidered along

⁷⁵ ἸΩ(ΑΝΝΗC) ΕΝ Χ(ΡΙCΤ)Ω ΤΩ Θ(Ε)Ω ΠΙCΤΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC Ο ΠΑΛΕΟΛΟΓΟC.

⁷⁶ Much scholarly debate has centered on exactly when John was crowned co-emperor and how to read these images as evidence for his coronation. In 1421 he officially assumed the status of co-emperor, but in his portraits in the Louvre manuscript and on the *sakkos*, both most certainly executed before that date, he is described as *basileus*. Because these images are in some sense “official,” it is tempting to see them as expressions of official titulature as if issued by the imperial chancellery, even if the titles go against other historical records. This is the position of Franz Dölger, “Die Entwicklung der byzantinischen Kaisertitulatur und die Datierung von Kaiserdarstellungen in der byzantinischen Kleinkunst” in G. Mylonas and D. Raymond (eds.), *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson on His Seventieth Birthday* (St Louis, 1953) II, 985–1005 [repr. *Byzantinische Diplomatik: 20 Aufsätze zur Urkundenwesen der Byzantiner* (Ettal, 1956)]. Alternatively, Barker, *Manuel II*, 350 n. 97, claims that the use of the title was merely an acknowledgment of his status as co-emperor and of his role as heir apparent. Cf. Obolensky, “Some Notes,” 141–6. My contention is that since the title appears on two images that were created as gifts for specific diplomatic contexts, the title should be read as a projection of his expected imperial status rather than as straightforward evidence for an earlier coronation date. Moreover, as the comparison of the two inscriptions makes evident, the phrasing of the emperor’s epithet should be seen in light of the context for which the imperial portrait was intended. In other words, both these luxurious objects characterize John in slightly different manners for their different contexts – they are not equivalent to documents. This point of methodology will be elaborated in the conclusion to this chapter.



Figure 5.5 Detail of the hem of the front of the “major” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, 1414–17, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-4)

the front of its hem (Figure 5.5).⁷⁷ These discrete images celebrate the union of Byzantine and Muscovite traditions and, quite literally, families. Heir to the throne of Byzantium, John Palaiologos, and his consort, Anna of

⁷⁷ Three late Byzantine *sakkoi* embroidered with complicated visual programs survive: one in the Vatican and two in the Kremlin. The other Kremlin piece will be discussed at greater length below. In addition to the *sakkoi* with elaborate figural iconography, a number of other liturgical vestments from the period survive. On those in the Kremlin, see Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*; and for a more comprehensive treatment of all the Byzantine embroidered vestments, see Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*.

Moscow, are represented in the lower-left corner. John and Anna each wear imperial ceremonial dress: they wear the imperial *loros*, bear the insignia of crown and scepter, and stand on royal *suppedita*. As discussed above, John's image conforms to the basic formal conventions for imperial portraiture, similar in most ways to the Louvre portrait. Anna's image too resembles other images of empresses, such as the depiction of her mother-in-law, Empress Helena Dragaš, in the Louvre portrait. Like Helena, Anna wears a tall crown with gems lining its upper edge and a *loros* with its trail draped over her left hand. Unlike Helena's pearl- or gem-studded scepter, Anna carries a long cruciform scepter in her right hand. She gestures with her left hand in the direction of her Byzantine spouse, John, but her gaze is turned decidedly in the opposite direction toward two further contemporary portraits in the other corner of the *sakkos*. In this pendant position on the right of the vestment are portraits of her parents Vasily I Dmitrievič, ruler of Moscow, and Sophia Vitovtovna, daughter of Vitovt, ruler of Lithuania. Unlike the inscriptions of Anna and John in Greek on the left, Anna's parents are identified by Slavonic inscription.⁷⁸ While the direction of Anna's gaze links her to her parents, her dress, gesture, and inscription collectively align her with her new Byzantine imperial family, the Palaiologoi. She is named as such explicitly by her Greek inscription accompanying her portrait: "Anna Most Pious Augusta Paleologina" (Ἀν(ν)α ἡ εὐσεβεστάτη Αὐγούστα ἡ Παλεολογίνα [*sic*]).⁷⁹

This combination of historical figures along the hem secures the chronology of the *sakkos*. Anna of Moscow married John, heir to the throne of Manuel II, in 1414.⁸⁰ Zosima the Deacon had been a member of the entourage that escorted Anna to Constantinople sometime between 1411 and 1413.⁸¹ Their union was short-lived as Anna died of plague in 1417 and was buried in Lips Monastery alongside other prominent members of the imperial family.⁸² The *sakkos* was presumably sent to Moscow to celebrate the union sometime between her arrival in Constantinople and her untimely

⁷⁸ Their inscriptions are given in Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 44; and Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 218. The Lithuanian connection will be addressed at greater length below.

⁷⁹ Unlike the inscription accompanying the portrait of Helena Dragaš on the Louvre portrait, again which reads ΕΛΕΝΗ ΕΝ ΧΩ / ΤΩ ΘΩ ΠΙCΤΗ ΑΥΓΟΥCΤΑ, Anna is here identified as a member of her new Palaiologan family, as a Palaiologina.

⁸⁰ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 312; following Schreiner, "Chronologische," 294.

⁸¹ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 190. Zosima refers back to this: "when I was there earlier, accompanying the princess to the empire of the pious Greek emperor, Kyr Manuel."

⁸² See *ibid.*, 311–12; and Barker, *Manuel II*, 347–8. John was married three times, first to the Muscovite princess Anna, then to Sophia of Montferrat in 1421, and lastly to Maria Komnene of Trebizond in 1427.

death. Beyond helping us date the *sakkos* with a great deal of precision to between 1414 and 1417, these contemporary portraits also reveal a subtle rhetoric of superiority at play here, as in other Byzantine diplomatic gifts. While the royal Muscovite figures on the right wear crowns and Dmitrievič carries a cruciform scepter, neither figure stands on royal *suppedia* or wears the imperial *loros*, sharply differentiating them from their daughter and her Byzantine imperial spouse on the left.⁸³ Furthermore, neither is depicted with a halo. This omission is unmistakable and significant: the Muscovite ruler and his wife are the only two figures on the entire *sakkos* who are not honored with a halo.

Such an omission, however, is not unprecedented. On the eleventh-century enamel plaques of the lower half of the Royal Crown of Hungary, for example, the Hungarian *kral*, Géza, is also the only figure to lack a halo (Figures 5.6 and 5.7). The enamels also depict the foreign ruler as a member of the Byzantine family of princes,⁸⁴ but position him as an inferior partner on the basis of inscriptions, dress, and insignia, and also formal arrangement and gazes. The relationship between the Hungarian and Byzantine rulers, moreover, was made concrete through marital ties, and the crown was sent to Budapest in relation to a Byzantine–Hungarian union.⁸⁵ Thus, both eleventh-century crown and the early fifteenth-century vestment celebrate Byzantine allegiances with the rulers of Budapest and

⁸³ Obolensky's claim that their "costumes and crowns are non-Byzantine and probably illustrate fairly faithfully the dress and regalia of the Muscovite rulers of the time" is entirely unfounded (Obolensky, "Some Notes," 16).

⁸⁴ On the maintenance of the ideology of the "family of princes," see Franz Dölger, "Die 'Familie der Könige' im Mittelalter," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 60 (1940), 397–420; and André Grabar, "God and the 'Family of Princes' Presided over by the Byzantine Emperor," *Harvard Slavic Studies*, 2 (1954), 117–23 [repr. *L'art de la fin de l'antiquité et du Moyen Age I*, 115–19].

⁸⁵ See Hilsdale, "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift," 602–31. The *suppedia* omission for the Muscovite rulers, although not nearly as significant as the halos, is thrown into sharper contrast by the fact that Constantine and Helena are depicted directly above them with halos and standing on *suppedia*. Obolensky, "Some Notes," 145–6, has remarked on the hierarchical distinction made evident by the discrepancy in the halos and has introduced as comparanda both the lower diadem of the Royal Crown of Hungary and the frescoes of the Church of Saint Sophia in Kiev, which he interprets as straightforward evidence for social relations. The hierarchical distinctions on the *sakkos*, he writes (145), "strongly suggest that this difference in status was also acknowledged by the court of Muscovy." There is an important methodological point at stake here. The Byzantines may have envisioned their court as superior to that of Moscow, but that does not in any way imply that accepting the *sakkos*, which was after all worn by a metropolitan appointed from Constantinople (i.e., with allegiances to the patriarch of Constantinople), constituted an acknowledgment of the subordinate status of Moscow. This same critique could be put to Obolensky's *The Byzantine Commonwealth*. These issues will be discussed further in this chapter's conclusion.

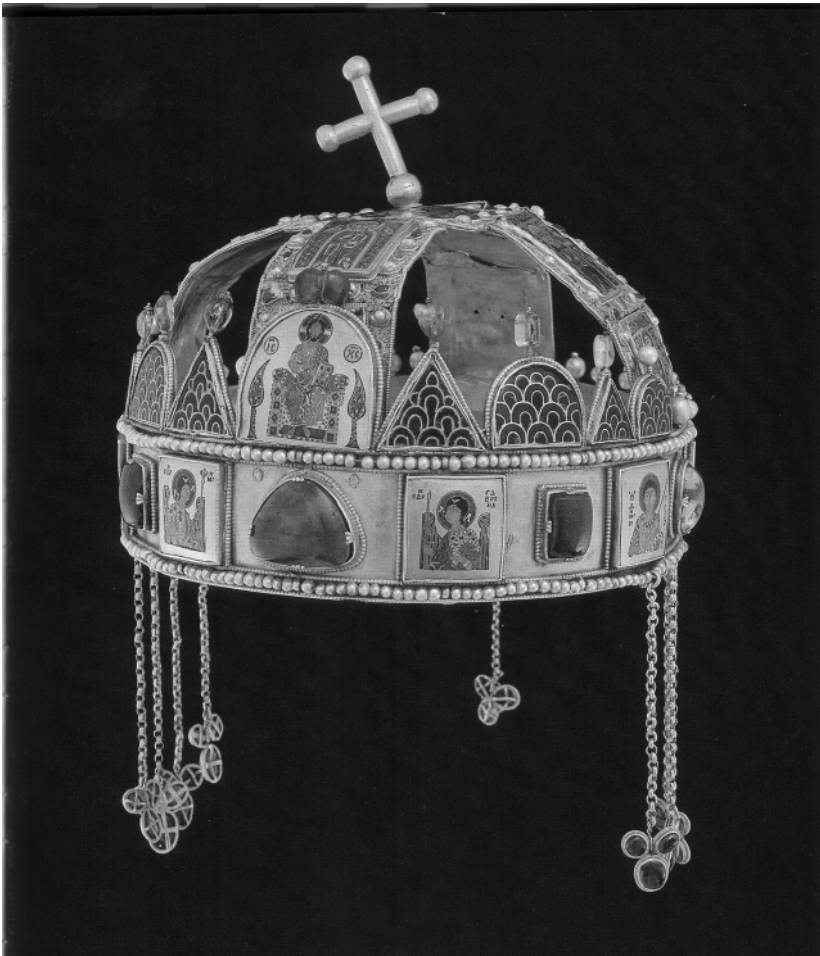


Figure 5.6 Front of the Royal Crown of Hungary, eleventh century, Hungarian Parliament Building, Budapest

Moscow respectively through diplomatic marriage. In both, the contemporary portraits are embedded within a cycle of sacred figures. The crown conveys the understanding of the terrestrial hierarchy on its back as a reflection of the celestial court on the front,⁸⁶ while on the *sakkos*, the earthly Byzantine-Muscovite court on the hem of the vestment bears a much more complex relationship to the elaborate liturgical cycle within which it is set. Moreover, unlike the crown, which constitutes the ultimate insignia of royal authority, the *sakkos* signifies sacerdotal authority.

⁸⁶ This reading is best expressed by Maguire, "Images of the Court," 183–91.



Figure 5.7 Back of the Royal Crown of Hungary, eleventh century, Hungarian Parliament Building, Budapest

The *sakkos* is the Eucharistic garment to be worn by the highest church official on only three occasions throughout the year: to celebrate the liturgy at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.⁸⁷ In the late twelfth century, the prerogative to wear the *sakkos* was reserved for the patriarch alone, but by the fourteenth century, select Episcopal authorities were also granted the privilege of wearing the *sakkos* for these three great feasts. In Russia only the head of the church celebrated the liturgy in this “most solemn vestment of the Orthodox clergy.”⁸⁸ The overall imagery of the major *sakkos* of Photios echoes both the liturgical celebration on the feast days when it was to be worn and the iconographic themes that would have been represented in the church space itself. The depiction of Christ’s Crucifixion and Anastasis occupy the two major cruciform spaces on the front of the *sakkos*. They are framed by narrative scenes and punctuated by iconic representations

⁸⁷ Alexander Kazhdan, “Sakkos (σάκκος),” *ODB*; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 22–4; Woodfin, *BFP*, 297; and Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 25–8. There is some debate as to its origin. See Piltz, *Trois sakkoi*, 18–26, on the origin of the *sakkos* and its imperial associations. Unlike the *sakkos* as church vestment, the imperial *sakkos* was worn by the emperor, according to Pseudo-Kodinos, at his imperial coronation, on Palm Sunday and Christmas Day (he wore a black *sakkos* as sign of humility on Christmas Day).

⁸⁸ *BFP*, 303.

of sacred and prophetic figures.⁸⁹ On the back, the larger cruciform spaces are filled by the Ascension and Dormition separated by the Transfiguration, surrounded by further narrative scenes similarly interspersed with portraits of prophets.⁹⁰ The Nicene Creed is inscribed in Greek around the central iconographic panels on the front and the back as a framing epigram for the sacred iconography.

The iconographic program of the vestment presents a full cycle of the *dodekaorton* or the twelve major episodes from the life of Christ from the Annunciation to Pentecost that comprises the basis for the monumental decoration of the typical Byzantine church interior.⁹¹ Sequentially the iconography begins on the front of the *sakkos* with the Annunciation, which spans the two upper *gammadia*, or gamma-shaped angles framing the central cruciform space. It then continues on the back of the *sakkos* with the Nativity, Flight into Egypt, Presentation, Baptism, and Raising of Lazarus all pictured within the *gammadia*. The Passion scenes follow on the front of the *sakkos* where the Entry, Last Supper, and Washing of Feet are pictured in the *gammadia* framing the large cruciform spaces that contain the principal

⁸⁹ The Crucifixion in the upper half of the *sakkos* is framed by the Annunciation in the top two corners of the cruciform space and the Entry into Jerusalem in the lower two spaces. The Anastasis, below this, is framed by the Last Supper and Washing of the Feet above, with the contemporary portraits below. Clear schematizations of the complex iconography are provided by Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 44 (front) and 50 (back) (which are preferable to the diagrams in Piltz, *Trois sakkoi*, 48–9). The full program of the *sakkos* is analyzed by Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*.

⁹⁰ The Nativity and Presentation are situated at the top of the Ascension scene above the Garden of Gethsemane and the Kiss of Judas. The Dormition is surrounded by the Epiphany and the Raising of Lazarus above, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost across the lower two corners. These scenes are supplemented by four narrative images along the lower sides of the *sakkos* depicting the Sacrifice of Abraham and Jacob's Ladder on the front, and the Tree of Jesse and Moses and the Burning Bush on the back.

⁹¹ On the *dodekaorton* and its configuration in the typical painted church interior, see Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London, 1948); Ernst Kitzinger, "Reflections on the Feast Cycle in Byzantine Art," *CA*, 36 (1988), 51–73; J.-M. Spieser, "Liturgie et programmes iconographiques," *Travaux et Mémoires*, 11 (1991), 575–90; and J.-M. Spieser, "Le développement du temple et les images des Douze Fêtes," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 69 (1999), 131–64 [repr. in *Urban and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2001), XVII]. Piltz, *Trois sakkoi*, 58–9, points out that the cycle of the *sakkos*, and the other Moscow *sakkos*, appears at Decani and Monreale, and proposes that the embroidered cycle would have corresponded to a particular church in Constantinople. It is far more likely, however, that the *sakkoi* draw on typical church imagery, not a particular pictorial program. See Woodfin, *BFP*, 295–303; and Schnitzer, "Von der Wandmalerei zur 'Gewandmalerei'. Funktionen eines Medienwechsels in der spätbyzantinischen Kunst," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 24 (1997), 59–69. See, most recently, Chapter 2 of Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, on the relationship between the program of church interiors and liturgical vestments as they are "mediated through liturgical action" (47).

images of the Crucifixion and Anastasis. The cycle then concludes on the back of the vestment with the Dormition of the Virgin and the Pentecost in the lower cross. With this elaborate Feast Cycle that unfolds across both sides, the vestment constitutes an instance of intermediality in that the imagery from the walls of a typical Byzantine church interior, including its icons and iconostases, is translated to the embroidered vestment.⁹² In this re-mediation, the embroidered cycle adorns the body of the metropolitan and celebrates his duties as minister of the sacred and the ritual context in which the *sakkos* would be worn. In turn, by wearing the vestment, the metropolitan comes to stand for the church in a general sense and, more specifically, his body becomes the church's architecture bearing the elaborate iconographic cycle.⁹³

Despite the dizzying appearance of the *sakkos* – its iconographic density encompassing more than 100 individual scenes – one can still speak of the ritual import of the scenes selected and the logic of their organization. The scenes represented on the vestment relate directly to the celebrant, the metropolitan, and the sacred mysteries ministered by him. With regard to the ordering of the individual scenes, which again do not follow a chronological sequence, Warren Woodfin has noted the concentration on the front of the vestment of scenes with Eucharistic associations. These, he argues, “correspond almost one-to-one with the traditional exegesis of the Eucharist and its symbolism.”⁹⁴ Moreover, at the very center of the front of the *sakkos* is a depiction of the entombed Christ, inscribed Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστός) ὁ ἐπιτάφιος. The inscription references not only the iconography

⁹² Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, has investigated in great detail the relationship between the Feast Cycle and the extant liturgical vestments.

⁹³ One particularly evocative illustration of this concept is the placement of the Annunciation, the beginning of the Feast Cycle. In typical Byzantine churches, the scene occupies the sanctuary entrance, often fully exploiting the architecture so that the archangel appears on the left directing the viewer's attention across to the Virgin on the right. It often spans the upper edge of the sanctuary opening, as is the case at the mid-twelfth-century Martorana in Sicily, or flanks the opening on either side, as at the eleventh-century Church of Saint Sophia in Kiev. On the front of the “major” *sakkos*, the Annunciation appears in the upper *gammadia* of the main central space on the front: spanning the shoulders of the wearer, the archangel on the left directs attention across the body of the wearer to the Virgin on the right.

⁹⁴ In particular, the Annunciation, Crucifixion, Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Washing of Feet, Resurrection, Sleeping Christ Child, and Christ in the Tomb. See Warren Woodfin, “Liturgical Mystagogy and the Decoration of Byzantine Vestments, c. 1200–1500,” paper at the 2004 International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, a position reiterated in published form in Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 122, as follows: “Here – exceptionally – is a collection of images that maps almost one-to-one on to the traditional mystagogy of the Eucharist.” My thanks to the author for sharing the earlier paper with me in advance of the publication of his book.

of Christ at or upon the tomb, but also the liturgical veil embroidered with the image of the dead Christ that was carried in solemn procession on Holy Saturday, the *epitaphios*.⁹⁵ In addition to extant fresco representations of the procession of this liturgical veil, a number of examples of embroidered *epitaphioi* survive from the later Byzantine period, including one that may have belonged to the same Metropolitan, Photios, for whom the major *sakkos* was commissioned.⁹⁶

In a kind of *mise-en-abyme*, the liturgical embroidery of the *sakkos* itself represents at its center another liturgical embroidery. This embedded ritual self-referencing relates specifically to the sequence of Easter celebrations. The *sakkos* was to be worn in conjunction with the procession of the ritual veil represented at its center (the *epitaphios*).⁹⁷ In other words, the

⁹⁵ The definition and ritual use of the liturgical textile depicting Christ laid out for burial is the subject of intense scholarly debate. In the contemporary Orthodox liturgy today, the “epitaphios” corresponds to the textile processed during Holy Week as part of the ritual reenactment of Christ’s burial cortège rather than the veil processed during the Great Entrance then placed over the gifts at the altar. Woodfin insists that such a distinction does not hold true for the Byzantine period. See Woodfin, *BFP*, 296–7; and *Embodied Icon*, 125–6. In fact, the opposite seems to have been the case: until at least the fourteenth century, the *epitaphios* was exclusively used during the Great Entrance processions and hence was associated with the gifts at the altar without apparently playing a role in the Holy Week services. In the later Byzantine period and into the post-Byzantine period, such textiles assumed a further ritual function during Holy Week by standing in for Christ’s body and participating in the elaborate burial cortège outside the church. But the chronology of the transition to this Holy Week ritual use is still contested. Robert A. Taft surveys the evidence for the development of the mimetic burial procession and the *epitaphios* in “In the Bridegroom’s Absence: The Paschal Triduum in the Byzantine Church” in *La celebrazione del Triduo pasquale: anamnesis e mimesis. Atti del III Congresso Internazionale di Liturgia* (Rome, 1990) [repr. *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond* (Aldershot, 1995), 71–97]. Some of the more canonic sources on this debate include Demetrios I. Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi in Byzanz* (Munich, 1965), 38–51; Robert A. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Rome, 1975); Sebastia Janeras, *Le Vendredi-Saint dans la tradition liturgique byzantine: structure et histoire de ses offices* (Rome, 1988), 393–402; Hans Belting, “An Image and its Function in Liturgy: The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium,” *DOP*, 34/35 (1980–1), 1–16; followed by Hans Belting, *The Image and its Public* (New Rochelle, 1990); Slobodan Ćurčić, “Late Byzantine *Loca Sancta*? Some Questions Regarding the Form and Function of Epitaphioi” in Slobodan Ćurčić and Doula Mouriki (eds.), *The Twilight of Byzantium*, 251–61, as well as the most recent studies by Woodfin cited above. The presence of donor inscriptions on numerous extant *epitaphioi* underscores their Eucharistic function, as the living and departed were commemorated during a pause in the Great Entrance procession. For Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 126, this commemorative aspect of the Great Entrance procession explains the contemporary portraits on the “major” *sakkos* of Photios. Natalia Teteriatnikov, “Private Salvation Programs and their Effect on Byzantine Church Decoration,” *Arte Medievale*, 7(2) (1993), 60, reads Photios as the *ktetor* of the *sakkos* and also links his image to dedicatory inscriptions on embroidered *epitaphioi*.

⁹⁶ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 34–5 (cat. no. 7).

⁹⁷ Again, the *epitaphios* was processed on Holy Saturday and the *sakkos* was worn on Easter Sunday.

epitaphios and the *sakkos* would have both been enacted ritually during the Easter celebrations. In this sense, the self-reflexive embedding has temporal and ritual specificity, unlike, for example, the earlier apse mosaics at San Vitale in Ravenna and the Eufrasiana in Poreč, which feature their bishop-saints Ecclesius and Eufrasius carrying micro-architectural models of their churches (Figures 2.11 and 2.12). Crucial to the logic of the mosaic donation scene is that the depicted gift bears an iconic resemblance to the building in which the representation is set. As discussed in Chapter 2, such self-reflexive imagery enhances the force of donation scenes by reduplicating the gift in mimetic miniature. On the vestment in Moscow, however, rather than the representation of another *sakkos* at its center, we encounter instead another ritual embroidery, the *epitaphios*. The two are linked not by visual resemblance, but by the ritual context of the Easter feast cycle in which they would be processed or worn. Instead of mimetic resemblance, in other words, the represented *epitaphios* and the real *sakkos* are linked through ritual.

The iconographic program of the *sakkos* visually evokes the circumstances of its ritual performance by highlighting the celebrant's duties and the occasion on which the vestment was to be worn. On the front of the *sakkos*, scenes of the Crucifixion and Anastasis are the largest elements, as they bear the most significant theological import, especially for the Easter celebration.⁹⁸ They are joined together by the *epitaphios*, the procession of which on Holy Saturday enacts the ritual of Christ's entombment. Beyond conveying a salvific message and highlighting the liturgical context of the vestment's wearer, the overall program at the same time celebrates ecumenical authority in general and the authority of the Metropolitan Photios in particular. Photios himself is portrayed among the panoply of sacred effigies flanking the central narrative scenes of the *sakkos*. By including the portrait of the current metropolitan in the veritable encyclopedia of sacerdotal power – which spans the patriarchates of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem – the *sakkos* includes his see in this sacred Orthodox topography.⁹⁹

The lateral sides of the narrative feast scenes on both the front and back of the *sakkos* comprise double vertical columns with iconic portraits of church hierarchs. The individual portraits adumbrate ecumenical authority and highlight the genealogy of the very ecclesiastical office itself. Formally, the

⁹⁸ Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 64.

⁹⁹ On the front are patriarchs of Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Antioch, and on the right are first- to ninth-century bishops from such diverse sees as Iconium, Salamis, and Agrigento. The back of the *sakkos* depicts bishops from such sees as Athens, Nicomedia, and Milan on the left and a diverse range of church authorities on the right.

sacred effigies are repetitive and generic in appearance. Each figure is represented in the same scale, frontally positioned, haloed, and standing within a framed architectural niche. Each holds a book, offers a gesture of benediction, and is identified by Greek inscription. Aside from the inscriptions, the main formal distinction among the portraits relates to dress.¹⁰⁰ Bishops and patriarchs are divided into two double columns on each side of the *sakkos* and are dressed according to rank.

In the columns on the right on the front of the *sakkos* and on the left on the back, the bishops are depicted wearing the Eucharistic over-garment known as the *phelonion* with the stole/scarf or *omophorion* draped from one shoulder to the other. Take, for example, the representation of St Dionysios (Figure 5.8), the first-century bishop of Athens who years later would be conflated with the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* and the patron saint of France, as discussed in the previous chapter. In the uppermost corner on the far-left shoulder of the back of the *sakkos*, St Dionysios is identified by inscription (ὁ ἄγιος Διονύσιος). His clearly articulated liturgical dress is conventional, much like the portrait of Dionysios in the opening pages of the Louvre manuscript in Paris (Figure 4.3). With regard to dress, the main difference between the embroidered and painted portraits of Dionysios relates to the design of the *phelonion*, which is unadorned on the *sakkos* and is constructed of square cruciform spaces as a *polystaurion phelonion* in the codex miniature.¹⁰¹ Recall that the painted saint stands against a flat, austere, blank page as the author of the gem-encrusted book he holds in his hand, the content of which fills the pages prefaced by his portrait. On the *sakkos*, the embroidered saint, framed by a poly-lobed arch, constitutes one of many identically dressed ecclesiastical figures. He appears virtually no different, for example, from those figures immediately positioned around him, the Bishops of Athens, Ancyra, and Nicomedia – or of Milan, Smyrna, or Damascus below his portrait.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ There are other minor differences in the representations, but the total effect is one of repeated genericism.

¹⁰¹ Woodfin points out that although no true Byzantine *polystaurion phelonion* survives, the fourteenth-century *sakkos* of Metropolitan Alexei is composed of crosses and angles. See Woodfin, *BFF*, 303 n. 3; and Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 25 and 94. The accretive quality of the *sakkos* of Metropolitan Alexei (c. 1364) is noteworthy: it includes thick silver stamped medallions associated with Alexei's visit to the Golden Horde according to Leonid A. Beliaev and Alexei Chernetsov, "The Eastern Contribution to Medieval Russian Culture," *Muqarnas*, 16 (1999), 104–5.

¹⁰² Directly to the right of Dionysios is Hierotheus, contemporary Bishop of Athens. On the row below him is Clement of Ancyra on the left and Anthimos of Nicomedia on the right. The three lowest figures on the left of the back are Ananias of Damascus, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Ambrose of Milan.



Figure 5.8 St Dionysios, detail of the upper-left corner of the back of the “major” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, 1414–17, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-4)

The hierarchs on the right side of the back of the *sakkos*, by comparison, are depicted wearing *sakkoi*, as is evident in the depiction of Sylvester in the uppermost left niche (Figure 5.9). To be clear, this change in liturgical dress is the principal distinction among the sacred effigies. Like all the church officials, an *omophorion* is draped across Sylvester's shoulders. But instead of the *phelonion*, he is dressed in the tunic-shaped *sakkos*, which is further adorned with a cross-in-circle motif.¹⁰³ The major *sakkos* of Photios is thus adorned with myriad *sakkos*-wearing church authorities.¹⁰⁴ The multiple embroidered *sakkoi*-wearing hierarchs serve as the pictorial grid for the vestment's iconography.¹⁰⁵ Photios himself, furthermore, is depicted on the *sakkos* wearing a *sakkos*, and his inclusion and location in the sacerdotal pantheon of church officials is significant (Figure 5.10).

While the right side of the front of the vestment represents bishops of such diverse sees as Nyssa, Agrigento, and Iconium, the left side comprises patriarchs and church fathers dressed in *sakkoi* with Photios, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, in the lowest position along the hem of the garment. In the far-left vertical band, the effigies portray, from top to bottom, Clement of Rome,¹⁰⁶ Gregory of Nazianzos, Ignatios of Antioch, and Athanasios. Directly to the right is another band of portraits depicting, again from top to bottom, Peter of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Babylas of Antioch,¹⁰⁷ Tarasios of Constantinople, and then Photios. This sequence presents a select chronology of church hierarchy culminating in the current metropolitan, the intended wearer of the very *sakkos* itself. Photios's depiction follows the same pictorial convention as the other great church officials. Dressed in a cross-in-circle-adorned *sakkos*, he bears a book in one hand, his other

¹⁰³ This is similar to the surviving *sakkos* of Metropolitan Peter from 1322, on which see Bank, *Byzantine Art*, 328.

¹⁰⁴ There are no representations in any media of *sakkoi* bearing narrative imagery and yet two other surviving *sakkoi* – one in the Vatican and another in the Kremlin – are embroidered with elaborate pictorial cycles like the *sakkos* under investigation. The *polystaurion* design of the *sakkos* of Metropolitan Alexei from around 1364 and the cross-in-circle motif of the *sakkos* of Metropolitan Peter from 1322 best exemplify the non-narrative designs of surviving Byzantine *sakkoi*.

¹⁰⁵ In terms of the *mise-en-abyme* aspect of imagery, then, there is also a play between the singular and the multiple with the singular *epitaphios* at the center and the multiple *sakkos*-clad hierarchs comprise the pictorial grid.

¹⁰⁶ The relics of St Clement played an important role in Russia, as Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 164, points out. Not only were they associated with Vladimir and his conversion after the Battle of Cherson (according to tradition, Vladimir took the relics from Cherson to Kiev), but in the mid-twelfth century, they played a crucial role in “the creation of the Russian church”: “the second native metropolitan was consecrated metropolitan of Kiev ‘by the head of St. Clement, as the Greeks consecrate by the head of St. John’” (164).

¹⁰⁷ See Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 216, on the sartorial exception of Babylas's depiction.



Figure 5.9 Sylvester, detail of the upper-right corner of the back of the “major” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, 1414–17, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-4)



Figure 5.10 Photios, detail of the lower-left corner of the front of the “major” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, 1414–17, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-4)

held in a gesture of benediction. But whereas the inscriptions of the other ecclesiastical figures in this group are identified by name (as in St Babylas) or by name and location (as in Tarasios of Constantinople), Photios's full title is given as follows: "His holiness Metropolitan of Kiev and all of Russia Photios" – ὁ πανιερώτατος μ(η)ρ(ο)πολίτης Κιέβου καὶ πάσ(ης) Ῥωσί(ας) Φώτιος.¹⁰⁸ This inscription lends a significant degree of specificity to his effigy in distinction to his venerable fellow hierarchs. His ecclesiastical title is fully elaborated, a title that was highly contested throughout the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁹

Photios was appointed Metropolitan in 1408 and arrived in Moscow in 1410 by embassy from Constantinople. In all likelihood he was entrusted with the task of negotiating the very union visualized on the *sakkos*, the marriage of the emperor's son, John, to the Muscovite ruler's daughter, Anna.¹¹⁰ In addition to the *sakkos*, his name appears on other works of Byzantine art in Moscow. His monogram appears on an embroidered *epitaphios*, on the frame of Our Lady of Vladimir icon, and also on the cover of a Gospel book of the Dormition Cathedral.¹¹¹ These items are surely the products of Constantinopolitan workshops and, along with other pieces of Byzantine origin, testify to the artistic connections between the patriarchate of Constantinople and the metropolitanate of Kiev and all of Russia.

Liturgical vestments in particular hold a privileged position in the mediation of sacred authority between Moscow and Constantinople. It was the prerogative of the patriarch to grant the privilege of wearing specific liturgical vestments as a sign of personal favor and distinction. In a letter dated to 1370, for example, Patriarch Philotheos of Constantinople chides Bishop Alexei of Novgorod for appropriating the privilege of wearing a *polystaurion*, a distinction his predecessor had received only as a personal favor.¹¹² The context for this letter, as Woodfin points out, "makes it clear that Aleksei's usurpation of the *polystaurion* is a sign of insubordination

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 219. Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 44: Ο// ΠΑ//ΝΙ//Ε//ΡΩ//ΤΑ//ΤΟC // Μ(ΗΤ)ΡΟ//ΠΟ//ΛΙ//ΤΗC// ΚΙ//Ε//ΒΟΥ//Κ//ΑΙ// ΠΑC(ΗC)// ΡΩCΙ(ΑC)// ΦΩΤΙΟC.

¹⁰⁹ Note that his title is much more elaborate than that on Metropolitan Peter's *sakkos* discussed below. The history of the metropolitan's title in the fourteenth century is extremely complicated and will be addressed, although not in great detail, below.

¹¹⁰ Obolsky, "Some Notes," 142.

¹¹¹ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 33–4 (cat. no. 7); and Bank, *Byzantine Art*, 310–14, 330. A long liturgical stole, or *epitrachelion*, is claimed to be associated with Photios by Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 36–7 (cat. no. 8). But Woodfin casts doubt on this association. See BFP, 307–8 (cat. no. 183); and Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 71.

¹¹² Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca I*, 522–3; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 84 and 189; Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 14–15; Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 24–5.

to Moscow, the political and religious centre of Byzantium's foreign policy."¹¹³ We should understand the major *sakkos* sent to Photios in the early fifteenth century similarly as a sign of patriarchal privilege and likewise suggesting an investment in Moscow as central to the diplomatic agenda of Constantinople. It celebrates the metropolitan's duties as minister of the sacred mysteries and also as the representative of Constantinople in Moscow.

The encyclopedia of the great ecclesiastical authorities of the past and present flanks the central iconography of the *dodekaorton* on the front and the back of the *sakkos*.¹¹⁴ The effigies of church officials are separated from the central feast scenes by the text of the Nicene Creed, which takes on the appearance of an epigram framing the *sakkos*'s central space. Glenn Peers has read frames and framing spaces in Byzantine art as sites of assimilation more than demarcation, as mediating zones that bridge immaterial and material realms.¹¹⁵ Consistent with this, the words of the Creed on the *sakkos* serve both to demarcate and to bridge the narrative feast scenes and the effigies of the hierarchs. They form the link between the particular ritual scenes of prophecy, incarnation, and salvation, and the ecclesiastical authorities who possess the ecumenical authority to administer the sacred. The statement of Orthodoxy, in other words, provides the grid for both the Episcopal office and the iconographic structure of the *sakkos*. And, in turn, the words of the Creed and the depicted bodies of the hierarchs constitute the frame for the visual program and the legend for its comprehensibility.¹¹⁶

The combination of major scenes of the Feast Cycle with the text of the Nicene Creed and portraits of standing sacred figures also constitutes the organizing principle for another extant Byzantine embroidered vestment in Moscow. The imagery of this slightly earlier vestment, which has come to be known as the "minor" *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, also evokes

¹¹³ Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 25.

¹¹⁴ On the front, the double stripes of hierarchs are further framed by four narrative scenes along the lower edge of the *sakkos*: the Sacrifice of Abraham and Jacob's Ladder on the front and the Tree of Jesse and Moses and the Burning Bush on the back. Again, for a full description of all the imagery of the *sakkos*, see Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 44–5 (cat. no. 10); and Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 215–20.

¹¹⁵ Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park, 2004).

¹¹⁶ In this sense, I see the text of the Creed as similar to Louis Marin's "pathetic figure" of the framework that enunciates "through his or her gesture, posture and gaze not so much what there is to see, what the spectator *should* see, but *how to see*." See Louis Marin, "The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures" in P. Duro (ed.), *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of Artwork* (Cambridge, 1996), 84.



Figure 5.11 Front of the “minor” *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, Kremlin Museum, Moscow (TK-5)

the basic iconographic program of the typical Byzantine church interior (Figure 5.11).¹¹⁷ The front and the back of the minor *sakkos* are centered

¹¹⁷ See Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 38–42; BFP, 302–3 (cat. no. 178); and Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 220–3. Like the major *sakkos*, it remained in the patriarchal vestry until 1920, at which point it was transferred along with the other vestments to the Kremlin Armory. Unlike the major *sakkos* with over 100 scenes, the imagery of the minor *sakkos* is spread over seventy scenes. Another Palaiologan *sakkos* embroidered with a complex iconographic program is preserved in the Treasury of St Peter’s, but it does not include the text of the Nicene Creed. On this piece, known erroneously as the “Dalmatic of Charlemagne,” see BFP, 300–1 (cat. no. 177); Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 214–15. The imagery of the Vatican *sakkos* is pared down to one large central scene, with each side joined by imagery on the shoulders. The front of the Vatican *sakkos* depicts an enigmatic image with associations of the Last Judgment and Glorification. The Communion of the Apostles, a sacramental image, spans the shoulders of the vestment, linking the Gospel account of the Transfiguration and the salvific imagery of the front. This emphasis on the Transfiguration and the sacramental image has been linked

on four major scenes from the Feast Cycle set within large circles (the Crucifixion and Anastasis on the front, and the Transfiguration and Ascension on the back), further inscribed within cruciform spaces, the angles of which are filled with images of prophets.¹¹⁸ The primary images at the center of the front and the back of the “minor” *sakkos*, like the slightly later “major” *sakkos*, are framed by columns of saints standing within poly-lobed arches. Those in the row closest to the center stand frontally and hieratically, book in one hand with the other raised in benediction, while the figures in the two outer columns turn in to direct their attention, and direct the viewer’s eye, toward the center. Also like the “major” *sakkos*, the central block of imagery and the standing saints are framed – or mediated – by the Greek text of the Nicene Creed.

Despite its designation today, which links the vestment with Photios, the “minor” *sakkos* was commissioned to commemorate the canonization in 1339 of Peter, who had served as metropolitan from 1308 to 1326.¹¹⁹ This relatively new saint is represented on the front of the minor *sakkos* immediately to the proper right of the central narrative panel, among the other standing saints. The second figure from the bottom, he is identified by name as St Peter, Metropolitan of Russia,¹²⁰ and is situated below Gregory

to the Hesychast movement, and Gregory Palamas in particular. Woodfin, *BFP*, 300, points out the plausibility that it may have belonged to Palamas himself. Whether or not such a specific reference can be substantiated, it is clear that the program is deeply theological. There are no contemporary portraits and yet the figuring of the sacramental as the instrumental link between the two more symbolic images on the front and back resonates for the wearer, who presides over the sacraments.

¹¹⁸ The arms of the vestment presently include representations of the Entry into Jerusalem, Pentecost, the Council of Nicaea, and the Raising of Lazarus – all set within roundels further inscribed within a Greek Cross like the four on the front and back of the *sakkos*, but without prophetic figures. However, these scenes were transferred from their original ground in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century, so there is some uncertainty about their original configuration. The back of the *sakkos* too seems to be later embroidery work (hence Slavonic rather than Greek inscriptions). See Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 59–60.

¹¹⁹ The “minor” *sakkos* was probably sent from Constantinople to Moscow to celebrate his canonization, which was sanctioned by the patriarch of Constantinople and, according to Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 156, seems to have been instigated by Metropolitan Theognostos as part of a larger agenda of augmenting the prestige of Moscow. Peter was responsible for moving the see from Vladimir to Moscow (1325). Presumably the *sakkos* was sent to Moscow to be worn by Peter’s successor to the metropolitanate. Both “major” and “minor” *sakkoi* include “new” local saints: the minor *sakkos* depicts St Peter, canonized in 1339, and the major *sakkos* includes a group of Lithuanian martyrs canonized in the mid-thirteenth century, as will be discussed below.

¹²⁰ Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ // ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ Η ΡΩΣΙΑΣ. Note the difference between Peter’s inscription, where he is described as the Metropolitan of Russia, whereas Metropolitan Photios’s titlature is much more elaborate and specific: again, Photios’s full title is given as follows “His holiness Metropolitan of Kiev and all of Russia Photios” – ὁ πανιερώτατος

the Theologian, above Cyril of Alexandria, and directly to the left of the evangelist Mark.

The scenes selected on the “minor” *sakkos*, Woodfin explains, present a “coherent summary of orthodox faith.”¹²¹ Indeed, as in the “major” *sakkos*, the history of salvation (prophesy and incarnation) is elaborated in visual terms and embedded within the very text of the Nicene Creed, the ultimate enunciation of Orthodoxy. Bärbel Schnitzer, like Woodfin, reads the minor *sakkos* in relation to the body of the metropolitan, pointing out the transformative power of the vestment to animate its wearer to become an icon of Christ.¹²² A similar argument could be made for the major *sakkos* as well, but the implications for such an animation are complicated by the contemporary visual references along its hem. Both “major” and “minor” *sakkoi* present their central messages of salvation as mediated by the words of the Nicene Creed and an impressive visualization of the sacred authority embodied by saints, church fathers, bishops, and patriarchs. They also both include a contemporary reference to the primary ecclesiastical representative of Constantinople: the recently canonized Metropolitan Peter on the “minor” *sakkos* and the current Metropolitan Photios on the “major” *sakkos*. But beyond embodying the authority of the metropolitan in both a real and a metaphoric sense, the ecumenical message of the “major” *sakkos* of Photios is complicated by the very concrete non-ecclesiastical historical figures embroidered along the lower hem that add a distinctly political dimension to the vestment as a whole. Here I refer not only to the representatives of the Constantinopolitan and Muscovite courts already discussed but also to the saints positioned between them.

μ(ττ)ρ(ο)πολίτης Κιέβου καὶ πάσ(ης) Ῥωσί(ας) Φώτιος. As we will see shortly, the title accompanying the office of the metropolitan was highly contested throughout the fourteenth century.

¹²¹ BFP, 302–3: “The scenes epitomizing the history of salvation, the prophets that foretold the Incarnation, and the saints who fulfilled the teachings of Christ combine with the inscribed symbol of faith, the Creed, to create an icon of Orthodox belief.”

¹²² Schnitzer, “Von der Wandmalerei zur ‘Gewandmalerei,’” 66. The author argues that the metropolitan wearing the *sakkos* serves as a living image of Christ not only as a convergence of earthly and heavenly priest but also embodies quasi-imperial and patriarchal powers (imperial because the emperor was described as the “living icon of Christ” in the twelfth century by Balsamon and Zonaras). Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow, 2006), 45–6, has alluded to the transformative powers of both *sakkoi* in Moscow and the importance of liturgical movement as part of what he calls a hierotopic approach to Byzantine art. Woodfin has made a more forceful argument about liturgical vestments more generally to animate the body of their wearer and to embody Christ’s image. On “the attachment of the Feast Cycle to the Christomimesis of the celebrant,” see especially *Embodied Icon*, 116–21.

One of the keys to a political reading of the “major” *sakkos* of Photios is centered on the three bust-length saintly effigies situated along the center of the lower hem, directly below the Anastasis and between the Byzantine and Muscovite royal couples. These are three mid-fourteenth-century Lithuanian martyrs who are identified in Greek as St John, St Eustathius, and St Anthony. Despite the Lithuanian origin of these saints, their inscriptions identify them explicitly as “Russian” (οἱ Ρόσοι).¹²³ This curiosity should not be read as an error, but rather as a statement of profound ideological import, as John Meyendorff has argued. The three figures in question were baptized in Vilna and martyred in 1347 by the order of the then pagan ruler Olgerd (d. 1377). Soon thereafter, they were canonized, and portions of their relics were sent to Constantinople in 1374 for veneration in Hagia Sophia.¹²⁴ The promotion of their cult was aimed at publicly shaming Olgerd as leader of the West-Russian Lithuanian territories, as the Byzantine authorities favored a unified single church for all Russia centered in Moscow.¹²⁵ It is crucial to bear in mind that the history of these martyrs was relatively recent history with regard to the creation of the *sakkos*. These martyrs of Vilna were new and local saints, and their cult was promoted in and by Constantinople.

In order to gage the political significance of the promotion of the cult of the Lithuanian martyrs in relation to Moscow in the later fourteenth

¹²³ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 44: Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) // ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΗC) /// Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) // ΕΥ//CΤΑ//ΘΙ//Ο//C/// Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) // ΑΝ//ΤΩ//ΝΙ//Ο//C /// ΟΙ ΡΟ//CΟ//Ι.

¹²⁴ This was by the order of Patriarch Philotheos. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 257–8 and 188, and “The Three Lithuanian Martyrs: Byzantium, Moscow and Lithuania in the Fourteenth Century” in *Eikon und Logos: Beiträge zur Erforschung byzantinischer Kulturtraditionen II* (Halle, 1981), 179–97. Balsamon even wrote an *encomion* in praise of these martyrs of Vilna, in which he specifies that Philotheos “was first in venerating them as martyrs and honoring them with icons, prostrations and yearly liturgical celebrations.”

¹²⁵ The conflict between West-Russian Lithuanian territories and the northeastern principalities configured around Moscow during this period grew out of a struggle for power in the face of the diminishing power of the Golden Horde. Under Olgerd, Lithuania had expanded into southwest Rus’ and during the 1370s, Olgerd and his allies made two attempts to take Moscow. Soon after Lithuania’s unsuccessful campaign against Moscow, significantly, a marriage was arranged in 1371 “between two junior members of the Muscovite and Lithuanian dynasty” – that is, between Vasily Dmitrievich and Vitovt’s daughter Sophia, pictured in the lower-right corner of the *sakkos*. See Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 187–8, 258. Patriarch Philotheos’s support of the Lithuanian martyrs is thus to be understood as anti-Lithuanian in its celebration of saints martyred under Olgerd, and hence as support for Moscow. Meyendorff introduces six patriarchal documents dated to 1370 that support the argument for unconditional support of Moscow at this time (188–90). On the relevant diplomatic correspondence, see also Martin Hinterberger, “Les relations diplomatiques entre Constantinople et la Russie au XIV^e siècle: Les lettres patriarcales, les envoyés et le langage diplomatique” in *Byzance et le monde extérieur* (Paris, 2005), 123–34.

and early fifteenth centuries, it is necessary to adopt a more distant vantage point. The inclusion of the three Lithuanian martyrs on the *sakkos* has been read as a statement about the rise of Moscow as pre-eminent political and ecclesiastical center. The fact that such a luxurious vestment from imperial Constantinople would picture these recent local saints whose martyrdom is associated with the ruling family of Moscow's rival Lithuania is highly unusual and should be understood as a commentary on local political tensions. Furthermore, by explicitly identifying them as "Russian" saints, the *sakkos* essentially redefines their cult. That such a contested subtext is situated between the portraits of Muscovite and Byzantine royal couples surely relates to Muscovite–Lithuanian rivalries and to the political consolidation tied both ecclesiastically and dynastically to Constantinople. Further, I would argue, the depiction of local saints embedded between the contemporary rulers relates to the fundraising agenda for the imperial city under threat. To fully appreciate this argument, we must bear in mind the longer history of cultural connections between Byzantium and Russia – solidified in the past through both faith and marriage – as well as the more recent histories of the once-unified Rus', which was fractured in the mid-twelfth century and dominated by the Golden Horde in the thirteenth century.

Entangled agendas: ecclesiastical and dynastic intermediaries

The tenth-century conversion of the Kievan princess Olga to Christianity is generally credited with paving the way for the Christianization of Rus'. Olga, who was regent for her son at the time and thus the ruler of Rus', traveled in person to Constantinople. The *Book of Ceremonies*, though silent regarding her baptism, elaborates the details of her imperial reception, including the dispersal of monetary gifts to the princess and her retinue.¹²⁶ The official

¹²⁶ See Jeffrey Featherstone, "Olga's Visit to Constantinople," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 14 (1990), 293–312; and Featherstone, "Olga's Visit to Constantinople in *De Cerimoniis*," *REB*, 61 (2003), 241–51. Jonathan Shepard, "Byzantine Diplomacy, AD 800–1204: Means and Ends" in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 69, notes that it is at least as significant that Olga received substantially more monetary gifts than certain other foreign representatives at court as the precise date of the visit. Her baptism remains a contentious point of scholarship. Dimitri Obolensky, "Russia and Byzantium in the Mid-Tenth Century: The Problem of the Baptism of Princess Olga," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 28 (1983), 157–71; Dimitri Obolensky, "The Baptism of Princess Olga of Kiev: The Problem of the Sources," *Byzantina Sorbonensia*, 4 (1984), 159–76; Dimitri Obolensky, "Olga's Conversion: The Evidence Reconsidered," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988–9), 145–58; Andrzej Poppe, "Once Again

implementation of Christianity, however, occurred under Olga's grandson Vladimir, who married the Byzantine princess Anna *Porphyrogenita*, daughter of Romanos II and sister of Basil II.¹²⁷ Her status as the legitimate daughter of a ruling Byzantine emperor made her the "most sought-after bride in medieval Europe" owing to the tradition that, as Raffensperger remarks, "dynastic marriage with [a *porphyrogenita*] was an endorsement of the legitimacy of a kingdom's royal or imperial claims."¹²⁸ The betrothal of Anna and Vladimir followed the Battle of Cherson, and their alliance concluded the peace.¹²⁹ Not long before the marriage of Anna to Vladimir, another Byzantine princess, Maria Lekapena, married the ruler of Bulgaria in 927, a union which also concluded peace. Ruth Macrides has pointed out that both of these tenth-century Byzantine brides were of the "highest in status" to be married to foreigners until the twelfth century, and, further, that both marriages were contracted so as to make peace with warring nations.¹³⁰ The understanding of marriage as central to the resolution of

Concerning the Baptism of Olga, Archontissa of Rus', "DOP, 46 (1992), 271–7 [repr. in *Christian Russia in the Making* (Aldershot, 2007) with a response to Featherstone].

Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 156–8, emphasizes not only that her travel to Constantinople was primarily motivated by trade but also that she seems to have been considering conversion in advance and, further, that her negotiations with the Byzantine Empire were very much part of her broader diplomacy with Rome and the German Empire.

¹²⁷ Nicolas Zernov, "Vladimir and the Origin of the Russian Church. Part II," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 28(70) (1949), 415, describes Vladimir as the Charlemagne of Russian history. See Donald Ostrowski, "The Account of Volodimer's Conversion in the *Povest' vremennykh let*: A Chiasmus of Stories," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 28(1–4) (2006), 567–80.

¹²⁸ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 50. As Raffensperger notes (162), Anna's hand had in fact previously been requested by Otto II and Robert Capet.

¹²⁹ Here I follow Raffensperger's reconstruction of the events in *Reimagining Europe*, 162–3. See also Jonathan Shepard, "Some Remarks on the Sources for the Conversion of Rus'" in S. W. Swierkosz-Lenart (ed.), *Le origini e lo sviluppo della Cristianità Slavo-Bizantina* (Rome, 1992), 59–96.

¹³⁰ Ruth Macrides, "Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship" in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 271. "From these two examples," she writes, "it is possible to argue that it was only when the stakes were highest, when the need to make peace was the function of a marriage, that princesses closest to the emperor were offered." See also Jonathan Shepard, "A Marriage Too Far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria" in Davids (ed.), *The Empress Theophano*, 121–49. On the issue of diplomatic brides within these contexts, see Alexander Kazhdan, "Rus'-Byzantine Princely Marriages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12/13 (1988/9), 414–29. Christian Raffensperger, "Russian Economic and Marital Policy: An Initial Analysis of Correlations," *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, 34(1–4) (2007), 149–59, has considered early Rus' dynastic marriages in tandem with developments in trade networks. He points out, for example, that the marriage of Vladimir and Anna not only related to political and religious purposes but that it was central to the maintenance of an economic relationship. These thoughts are developed and expanded in Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*. See also Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics: The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345–1547* (Stanford, 1987), Chapter 4, on the marital politics of the later Muscovite period.

conflict is underscored by the fact that many foreign brides married into the imperial court of Constantinople were rebaptised with the name Irene or peace.¹³¹

These marriages also constituted an essential part of a missionary hagiography, as both further involved the implementation of the church hierarchy and the establishment of what has come to be known, although contentiously, as the “Byzantine Commonwealth.”¹³² Legend has it that Vladimir’s conversion to Christianity, and that of his people, was one of the conditions of his marriage to Anna, who arrived in Kiev in 988 with a large retinue that included priests. Vladimir’s baptism marked the establishment of Christianity in Kiev under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople. From then on, in theory at least, the patriarch appointed the metropolitan, who constituted the key spiritual, and often political, intermediary to Constantinople.¹³³

Along with Christianity, the early rulers of Kievan Rus’ appropriated the visual splendors of the imperial capital.¹³⁴ Connections with Constantinople were maintained not only by a unified embrace of Christianity and the ecclesiastical hierarchy centered on the patriarch of Constantinople, but also by the adoption of symbols of power such as relics and imperial imagery. This can be seen in the princely complex in Kiev, where

¹³¹ Franklin and Shepard (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 11, 276.

¹³² Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, 158–9. For more on this concept, see below, 329. Chapter 5 of Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, deals with the problematic historiography of Vladimir’s conversion and the establishment of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Rus’.

¹³³ Dimitri Obolensky, “Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow: A Study in Ecclesiastical Relations,” *DOP*, 11 (1957), 23–78 [repr. *Byzantium and the Slavs: Collected Studies* (Aldershot, 1971), VI], has evaluated the evidence for this claim, in particular Gregoras’s account of the alternation of the nationality of the metropolitans of Russia. According to general scholarly opinion, the metropolitan of Kiev, as the head of the Russian Church under the authority of the patriarch of Constantinople, represented “both personally and officially the patriarchal and by natural extension the imperial, point of view” – as characterized by Franklin, “The Empire of the *Rhomaioi*,” 510. In terms of the role of the metropolitan in the Kievan period, Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 171–5, acknowledges that the metropolitans “were, to a greater or lesser degree, agents of Constantinople” (172) and that they had “more in common with the Constantinopolitan court than with the Kievan” (174), but that ultimately they were not as influential as they are generally portrayed in scholarship. John Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (New York, 1995), 132, emphasizes that the majority of metropolitans heading the Church in Russia from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century played a far more active role in political life than in the Kievan period. Later Byzantine sources, as we will see, characterize the metropolitan emphatically as the direct extension of the patriarch.

¹³⁴ In fact, the visual splendors of imperial Constantinople are woven into the legends of Vladimir’s conversion. The Russian Primary Chronicle describes Vladimir’s envoys in Constantinople overcome by the splendor of the liturgy’s celebration in Hagia Sophia. See Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 159–63.

a collection of relics forges links to the Pharos Chapel in Constantinople, the site where imperial authority was reified through relic collection. Under Vladimir's successor, Iaroslav, the famous church of St Sophia in Kiev was adorned with glimmering Byzantine mosaics in emulation of the imperial capital – it even included a visual evocation of Constantinople's Hippodrome.¹³⁵

At roughly the same moment that Byzantine imperial authority was being consolidated in exile following the crusader conquest of 1204, Kievan Rus' came under the dominion of the Golden Horde (1237–40). Under Mongol rule, it became the Khan's right to confirm Russian princes and to collect tribute and conscripts.¹³⁶ The territories that had once been unified and centralized around Kiev were divided among competing principalities in western and central Russian lands, all of whose leaders required the confirmation of the Khan. With a loosening of Mongol political control by the later fourteenth century, Lithuania and Moscow emerged as competing centers of power, each of which sought to lead control of the patrimony of ancient Rus'. Part of what it meant to vie for this patrimony relates to imperial Constantinople and the legacy of ancient Romaneia.¹³⁷ Despite the beleaguered state of the Byzantine Empire – whether in exile or reclaimed – Constantinople still embodied the memory of imperial rule and the source of ecclesiastical authority.

The history of Byzantium and Russia in the fourteenth century has traditionally been read as a teleology that leads to the rise of Moscow, as Majeska has eloquently put it, from “an undistinguished hunting lodge in the twelfth century to the capital of a powerful centralized state in the fourteenth century.”¹³⁸ The design of the *sakkos* has been read according

¹³⁵ Most recently Elena Boeck, “Simulating the Hippodrome: The Performance of Power in Kiev's St. Sophia,” *ArtB*, 91(3) (2009), 283–301, has summarized the Constantinopolitan associations of the program, including the mosaic image of the Blachernitissa in the apse and the Hippodrome and “skomorokhi” frescos running from the southwestern turret to the princely gallery above.

¹³⁶ For a general overview, see Charles Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington, 1985); John Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia, 1200–1304* (London, 1983); and Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980–1584* (Cambridge, 1995). To be clear, despite the devastation of the Mongol invasions, the political structure was left by the khans more or less intact. Moreover, the Church was granted exemption from the taxes levied on the population. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 38–9, thus sees the Church as “a channel for important international contacts” and as the “main guardian of Byzantine cultural values.”

¹³⁷ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 10. See Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, regarding Constantinople as embodying the memory of imperial rule, of Romaneia, in Kievan Rus'.

¹³⁸ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 10.

to this narrative as a Byzantine endorsement of Moscow's pre-eminence.¹³⁹ This reading, however, is complicated by the multiple allegiances among the fragmented local political authority in relation to the Golden Horde, and the contested ecclesiastical authority in relation to Constantinople and Rome. In the later fourteenth century, with the dissipation of Mongol power in the farther western territories, Lithuania resembled a reconstituted version of Kievan Rus', with a loose confederation of principalities and the symbolically significant city of Kiev, the ancient capital of Rus', and the ancient residence of the Orthodox metropolitan, which had been transferred to Moscow.¹⁴⁰ The Lithuanian territories of predominantly Orthodox Christian population, however, were under the dominion of a ruling elite that remained pagan until the end of the fourteenth century.¹⁴¹

Lithuania's official conversion to Christianity came in 1386 and it was prompted by dynastic marriage. Olgerd's son Jagiello was baptized into the Roman Church when he married the queen of Poland. Thus, Lithuania was linked to Poland and hence to Rome.¹⁴² But by the time that the *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios was commissioned in the early fifteenth century, Lithuania and Moscow were dynastically linked. In 1391 Sophia, the daughter of the Lithuanian ruler Vitovt (d. 1430), married Vasily I Dmitrievič of Moscow.¹⁴³ Their marriage embodied the dynastic

¹³⁹ In fact, the *sakkos* features in Meyendorff's study *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 257, the cover of which reproduces a detail of Dmitrievič and his consort.

¹⁴⁰ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 10; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 55–61. The residence of the metropolitan had been moved from Kiev first to Vladimir in 1300 and then to Moscow in 1328.

¹⁴¹ Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 57, characterizes Lithuanian paganism as "historically anachronistic." For the larger (and earlier) context, see S. C. Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁴² Olgerd had died in 1377 and Jagiello (a.k.a. Jogaila) was baptized into the Roman Church when he married the queen of Poland in 1386, thus uniting through marriage Lithuania to Poland and hence Rome. In Cracow, Jagiello, who had been Orthodox Christian, was rebaptized Ladislas and married Jadwiga, daughter of Louis of Hungary. See Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 243. Conversion to Christianity "presented the Lithuanian princes with an inevitable choice between East and West" – i.e., it was a cultural and political choice.

¹⁴³ Coincidentally, this is merely one year before Manuel II Palaiologos and Helena Dragaš were married. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 244, traces the background negotiations for this marriage back to 1387 and believes that Metropolitan Cyprian played a key role in the negotiations ("one can be almost certain that [Cyprian's] mission to western Russia [in 1387] was connected with plans to counteract the effects of Jagiello's marriage and apostasy from the Orthodox faith"). For the longer history of Vitovt (a.k.a. Vytautas the Great or Witold), see Giedrė Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler: Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania* (Budapest, 2006).

unification under Orthodoxy of Moscow and Lithuania, and the configuration of their depiction on the *sakkos* underscores this point. To be clear, Moscow and Lithuania remained distinct independent entities politically, but this marriage inaugurated a period of relatively amicable coexistence between Moscow, headed by Vasily I Dmitrievič from 1390, and Lithuania, now led by his father-in-law, Vitovt, who assumed power in 1392.

Lithuanian Grand Duke Vitovt (1392–1430) also seems to have been constructing cultural ties to Constantinople around this time. He received Greek delegates and sent embassies to the patriarch in Constantinople, which is understandable given the contested history of the metropolitanate in the region.¹⁴⁴ He also seems to have commissioned a series of “byzantinizing” frescoes for his residence in Trakai¹⁴⁵ as well as a detailed map of Constantinople by Florentine Buondelmonti.¹⁴⁶ The precise circumstances of the commissioning of this map, which no longer survives, remain obscure. The prologue of two manuscripts of the *Liber Insularum* claims that Buondelmonti already sent to Vitovt a large parchment (*membrana maxima*) where the whole city is depicted with all its internal and external details.¹⁴⁷ This inscription is the only evidence for any sort of connection between Buondelmonti and the Lithuanian court, and is the only trace of

¹⁴⁴ Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler*, 261. ¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 51–62.

¹⁴⁶ See Gerola, “Le vedute,” 257; Barsanti, “Costantinopoli e l’Egeo,” 168–9; Ian Manners, “Constructing the Image of a City: The Representation of Constantinople in Christopher Buondelmonti’s *Liber Insularum Archipelagi*,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87(1) (1997), 72–102; Giuseppe Ragone, “‘Membrana Maxima’: Cristoforo dei Buondelmonti, Vytautas of Lithuania and the First Modern Map of Constantinople” in Irena Valikonytė and Bronius Dundulis (eds.), *Lietuva ir jos kaimynai nuo normanų iki Napoleono: Broniaus Dundulio atminimui [Lithuania and its Neighbors from the Normans to Napoleon: In Memory of Bronius Dundulis]* (Vilnius, 2001), 150–87, especially 155–65; and Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler*, 260–1.

¹⁴⁷ The inscription, which is listed below in note 148, makes clear that the great parchment for Vitovt preceded the small map in the *Liber*, but the precise date of the lost great map of Constantinople remains unclear. Some scholars have tried to associate it with the occasion of the marriage of Anna and John, when in fact it seems much more likely to have followed after that event. Manners, “Constructing the Image of a City,” associated the *membrana maxima* with the marriage of John and Anna, but he gets the chronology and familial relations wrong, noting that “Buondelmonti received the map commission from Vitold, as the marriage between Vitold’s daughter (*sic*) and John VII (*sic*) Palaeologus took place in 1418.” But, as discussed above, Vitovt’s granddaughter (not daughter) traveled to Constantinople to marry the future John VIII (not John VII) in 1414 and she died in 1417. Thus, the argument for the great map being produced either in advance or on the occasion of the marriage of Anna and John is virtually impossible. Ragone, “‘Membrana Maxima,’” 158, who also notes these chronological problems, dismisses the marriage context as motivating the commission and proposes a few other preliminary lines of inquiry.

the lost great map of Constantinople that preceded the smaller city views included in the *Liber* created for Cardinal Giordano Orisini, two of which were introduced in Chapter 2 (Figures 2.5 and 2.7).¹⁴⁸ But the very existence of this *membrana maxima* implies that Buondelmonti's engagement with the cartography of Constantinople preceded – or at least was contemporary with – his commission from Florentine humanists.¹⁴⁹ The “great parchment,” which constituted the Ur cartographic image of the Byzantine capital, was created for the Lithuanian court.

The relative peace between Moscow and Lithuania inaugurated by the ascendancy of Vitovt and the marriage of his daughter to Dmitrievič concluded a particularly turbulent period in terms of the intertwined ecclesiastical, political, and dynastic loyalties, and the office of the metropolitan is situated at the nexus of these issues, further involving Constantinople in the narrative, as a brief history of these interactions will reveal.¹⁵⁰ The formalization of the transfer of the seat of the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia to Moscow in 1328 occurred under Metropolitan Theognostos, who was succeeded in 1353 by Metropolitan Alexei, who was the godson of the recently deceased ruler of Moscow.¹⁵¹ Olgerd of Lithuania had proposed another candidate for the position, Romanos, a relative of his wife, and he stipulated that the Metropolitan should reside not in Moscow but Kiev, which was now part of Lithuania. With the subtle suggestion that

¹⁴⁸ To be clear, the *Liber's* preface to Constantinople claims as its motivation for the short description of the city to give the reader some idea of the city and its sights. In two copies, namely Marciana cod.lat.X.215=2772 and Vatican Chigi F.IV.74, however, the prologue before Constantinople includes another phrase absent in other copies: Buondelmonti wishes to describe the ancient ruins of Constantinople as briefly as possible since he has already sent to “Bottoldus dux Russie” a large parchment where the whole city is depicted in all its internal and external details. Bottoldus should be understood as Witold in Polish or Vytautas in Lithuanian or Vitovt. The inscription transcribed from the Vatican manuscript is cited in Ragone, “Membrana Maxima,” 156: “Quamvis hec civitas insulla non sit et ponere eam in numero harum insularum condecens non foret, actamen ut aliqua de urbe Constantinopoli videntes comprehendere possint, ideo quam brevius potui hic de ruinis eius scripsi, licet in membrana maxima Bittoldo duci Russie miserim ad videndum suis omnibus extra atque infra attinentiis.”

¹⁴⁹ Regardless of the convoluted rescension of the *Liber insularum*, the seventy manuscripts from the decades immediately after the work was produced speak of the “rapid and immediate diffusion” of Buondelmonti's text (Ragone, “Membrana Maxima,” 154–5).

¹⁵⁰ The ecclesiastical politics of the later fourteenth century between Moscow, Lithuania, and Constantinople are extremely complicated. A succinct overview of the issues surrounding the appointment of the metropolitan is offered by Martin, *Medieval Russia*; Majeska, *Russian Travelers*; Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church*; and is discussed in greater depth by Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*. Essential reading on the topic also includes Obolensky, “Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow,” 23–78; and Franz Tinnefeld, “Byzantinisch-russische Kirchenpolitik im 14. Jahrhundert,” *BZ*, 67(2) (1974), 359–84.

¹⁵¹ Note that a Byzantine *sakkos* of Alexei survives in the Kremlin – see note 101 above.

Olgerd was considering conversion to Orthodoxy, the patriarch created a separate and distinct metropolitanate for Lithuania in 1354 headed by Romanos. When he died in 1361, however, ecclesiastical authority returned to Metropolitan Alexei, to the consternation of Olgerd. The Lithuanian ruler complained bitterly to the patriarch about Alexei's negligence in his realm and demanded a separate metropolitan for the Orthodox of Lithuania independent of Moscow. In response, Patriarch Philotheos dispatched the priest-monk Cyprian as an envoy¹⁵² to mediate and restore peace in the region. But in the face of repeated pressure from Olgerd, which included as an ultimatum the threat to turn to Rome and to ensure the conversion of all his people to Catholicism, the patriarch acquiesced and approved the consecration of Cyprian as the Metropolitan of Kiev and Lithuania in 1375 with the understanding that at Alexei's death, Cyprian's authority would encompass both the Lithuanian and Muscovite territories.¹⁵³

Two key points about Byzantine–Russian ecclesiastical relations emerge in the letters of Patriarch Philotheos. First, so far as Byzantium was concerned, the metropolitan was an extension of the patriarch. In a letter to the Muscovite ruler in 1370, the patriarch outlines the proper respect to be paid to Metropolitan Alexei: “The metropolitan appointed by me is an image of God, and is my representative, so that anyone who is submissive to him and is concerned with loving, honoring and obeying him, is actually submissive to God and to Our Humility.”¹⁵⁴ Second, the patriarch envisions one metropolitan to cover all of Russia. “The nation [of the Russians] is very big and numerous; it requires great care, and they all depend on you,” the patriarch writes to Alexei.¹⁵⁵ A number of obstacles stood in the way of this vision for a unified metropolitanate as an extension of the patriarchate, including the ongoing rivalry between the rulers of Moscow and Lithuania, which only worsened following the death of Alexei in 1378.¹⁵⁶

Metropolitan Alexei's death resulted in over a decade of chaos and upheaval.¹⁵⁷ The Muscovite ruler refused to acknowledge Cyprian as

¹⁵² Or “official investigator,” according to Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 389.

¹⁵³ On the variations of the titles in this context, see Dimitri Obolensky, “A ‘Philorhomaïos Anthropos’: Metropolitan Cyprian of Kiev and All Russia (1375–1406),” *DOP*, 32 (1978), 86 n. 30 [repr. *Byzantine Inheritance*, XI]; Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church*, 146–7; and note 157 below.

¹⁵⁴ Cited in Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 188. ¹⁵⁵ Cited *ibid.*, 189.

¹⁵⁶ As well as the oppressive rule of the Golden Horde, whose very survival depended on such a rivalry. See Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 199.

¹⁵⁷ Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church*, 148, encapsulates this turmoil well when he describes how the death of Alexei inaugurated “twelve years of bewildering changes of direction and disorder and violence . . . in which patriarchs replaced patriarchs of different hues, and

metropolitan and instead sent his own candidate for the position to Constantinople for patriarchal approval.¹⁵⁸ The ensuing sequence of events is described dramatically by Obolensky as “one of the most sordid and disreputable episodes in the history of Russo-Byzantine relations.”¹⁵⁹ Just as the Muscovite ship bearing the metropolitan elect passed through the Bosphorus on approach to Constantinople in 1379, he died, and the delegation forged documents and possibly even bribed officials in order to put forward as a substitute candidate one of their own, the abbot Pimen, who was then consecrated metropolitan in the spring of 1380.

Eventually, after nearly a decade of ecclesiastical unrest, Cyprian was welcomed to Moscow as metropolitan and Pimen was rejected outright.¹⁶⁰ From 1390 until his death in 1406, Cyprian served as Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, a hard-fought, contentious, and fragile title. During his tenure, much of his energies were directed toward the goal of preserving a unified metropolitanate with Moscow as its seat, and securing peace with Lithuania was central to this agenda. Despite the fact that Jagiello, who had inherited the throne of his father Olgerd, had united through marriage Lithuania with the kingdom of Poland, as noted above, he was unable to effect the conversion of his people to Rome, and ultimately his cousin Vitovt assumed power. Metropolitan Cyprian seems to have played an instrumental role in the forging of peace between Lithuania under Vitovt and Moscow under Dmitrievič. To this end, Cyprian’s first recorded act upon arriving in Moscow was to officiate the wedding of Vitovt’s daughter, Sophia, to Vasily I Dmitrievič in 1391.¹⁶¹ This union proved crucial to peace in the region,

metropolitans – ‘of great Russia’, ‘of all Russia’, ‘of Kiev and Great Russia’, ‘of Kiev and Lithuania’, ‘of Little Russia’: titles often so vague and confusing as to make it difficult to understand what exactly they meant – interchanged and journeyed with such alarming speed between Moscow, Kiev, Lithuania, the Kipchak Horde and Constantinople as to make it frequently impossible to know what they were after, why they fled, and who chased them.”

¹⁵⁸ Dimitri had Cyprian arrested and expelled, and he put forward as metropolitan elect his own confessor and counselor, Mitjai/Michael.

¹⁵⁹ Obolensky, “A ‘Philorhomaïos Anthropolos,’” 90. Note that these events coincide with the struggle for the Byzantine imperial throne between Emperor John V Palaiologos and Andronikos IV. See the earlier discussion of this context in the Introduction to Part II and Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁰ Dimitri’s initial acceptance of Cyprian in 1391 perhaps resulted from his outrage at the results of his delegation in Constantinople or because he was increasingly becoming interested in the Hesychast monks who supported Cyprian (as proposed by Obolensky, “A ‘Philorhomaïos Anthropolos,’” 90). Following a brief about-face, in which Dimitri rejected Cyprian and embraced Pimen (1381–5), Pimen was eventually removed from the office of metropolitan and was excommunicated by the patriarch in 1385 following an inquiry led by delegates from Constantinople.

¹⁶¹ See note 143 above. The union may have resulted from Cyprian’s negotiations in 1387 as proposed by Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 224. Familial ties between the

as the rulers of Lithuania and Moscow were now father-in-law and son-in-law.

Cyprian was succeeded by Photios as metropolitan. Photios, for whom the “major” *sakkos* was made and who is pictured in the lower-left corner of its front, continued his predecessor’s agenda of promoting a unified metropolitanate. Also like his predecessor, Photios began his tenure as metropolitan with a marriage alliance, this time between the daughter of Dmitrievič and the heir of the throne of Byzantium, both depicted on his *sakkos*.

Constantinople as sacro-imperial source

With an understanding of the longer history of the intertwined ecclesiastical and dynastic politics now in place, we can return to the imagery and organization of the *sakkos*. By visually privileging the three Lithuanian martyrs, the *sakkos* inserts their Lithuanian history into the genealogy of Muscovite–Byzantine union. The designation of the saints as “Russian” but, again, written in Greek, signals a clear Byzantine vision for a unified Russia with one metropolitan and one ruling family, tied ecclesiastically and dynastically to Constantinople. It thus also provides a visualization of the merits of diplomatic marriage in two generations and across two cultures: Lithuania and Moscow on the right, and Moscow and Constantinople on the left. Orthodoxy binds these dynastic unions, the design of the *sakkos* suggests, just as on the most basic formal level the Nicene Creed fills the interstices of the *sakkos*, imbricating the royal and holy images.

What does it mean for the vestment’s salvific program to include contemporary rulers and local histories? Ultimately the program emphasizes Constantinople as the source of spirituality and ecclesiastical and dynastic authority. The design of the *sakkos* inserts Metropolitan Photios into the ecumenical genealogy of church hierarchs and emphasizes him as a mediating figure for the liturgical rite. He is positioned in the lower-left corner directly below Tarasios, former Patriarch of Constantinople (784–806), and to the left of John Palaiologos, future Emperor of Constantinople (Figures 5.5 and 5.10). Together, Photios and John embody the priestly and imperial authority of Constantinople: Photios was appointed by the patriarch of

royal houses of Lithuania and Moscow were further solidified as well: apparently Vasily I arranged a marriage between his sister Maria and Olgerd’s son Lugveny in 1394. See Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church*, 158 n. 46.

Constantinople, and John was the emperor's son, though he is represented as emperor in his own right on the *sakkos*.¹⁶² As visualizations of the current authority of the capital, they stand below venerable historical exemplars of their office. The metropolitan is positioned directly beneath the patriarch of Constantinople who convened the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 787, which officially condemned iconoclasm, and John Palaiologos is positioned directly below Constantine the Great, founder of New Rome. The lower-left corner of the *sakkos* therefore ultimately emphasizes Constantinople by situating the current links to the imperial capital in visual dialogue with historical representatives of the ecclesiastical and imperial authority of Constantinople. To be clear, the *sakkos* does not represent the current patriarch and emperor, but their intermediaries, the metropolitan and heir apparent, who link Moscow to Constantinople through the ecclesiastical hierarchy and through imperial dynastic alliance.

The Constantinopolitan figures with whom the Muscovite princess Anna is visually aligned are concentrated neatly in the lower-left corner of the front of the *sakkos* (Figure 5.5). They are thus on Christ's right-hand side, a position of salvation that is further stressed by the close formal relationship of their effigies to the narrative iconography of the Feast Cycle along the central axis. In the lower cruciform scene of the Anastasis, Christ reaches energetically to his right, where the saved are clustered in anticipation in the lateral arm of the cross. This lateral arm with the saved is situated directly above the head of Anna. There is thus a close contiguity between the saved in the Anastasis scene and the contemporary Constantinopolitan figures.

A vertical hierarchy is also simultaneously at play in the overall design of the *sakkos*. The figures depicted along the hem are the most proximate figures, all of whom were either still alive or recently deceased (as in the Lithuanian martyrs) at the time of the creation of the *sakkos*. Above them are sacred historical figures on the sides and biblical events in the center. Further above, on the collar, the uppermost portion of the vestment, are sacred images of the Virgin orant on the front and Christ on the back flanked by saints, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim. The underpinning of this hierarchical aesthetic is clearly Dionysian, with the earthbound figures at the hem, below the salvific program relating to the Eucharist, and the celestial hierarchy at the uppermost area.¹⁶³ The organization of the *sakkos* thus conveys a Dionysian procession from the material level ascending to the

¹⁶² See note 76 above regarding the status of John as co-emperor and his inscription.

¹⁶³ Regarding the relevance of this Dionysian framework in Moscow, it is noteworthy that at the Prodromos monastery in Constantinople, Photios's predecessor Metropolitan Cyprian translated into Church Slavonic the works of Pseudo-Dionysios among other important texts

divine, each figure mediated in its own rank appropriately by the Nicene Creed, which provides the grid and the conceptual legend for all the images. Moreover, beyond merely a Dionysian ascent from the earthly to the ethereal, the *sakkos* formally stresses the essential interconnectedness of the different ranks by situating the contemporary royal portraits in the spaces of the lower *gammadia* against the same flat gold background as the other sacred scenes. The contemporary figures thus comprise the lower half of the frame for the Anastasis in the central cross. In other words, their effigies, while positioned along the hem as the most earthbound of figures, remain an integral component of and interlocking with the whole design.

In the end, the design of the *sakkos* celebrates the ecumenical authority of the church and the imperial authority of the emperor. In addition to portraits of saints relatively recently canonized in Constantinople, it features the effigy of Metropolitan Photios, the highest-ranking hierarch appointed from Constantinople, below Tarasios, earlier Patriarch of Constantinople, and next to John Palaiologos, the future Emperor of Byzantium. The *sakkos* places the contemporary royal effigies in the forefront of the composition, celebrating family unity and the intertwined histories of Palaiologan and Muscovite dynasties, but beyond this it ultimately emphasizes the source of family unity as Orthodoxy that binds them all and that is centered in imperial Constantinople. The *sakkos*, then, illustrates the Byzantine vision of – or really desire for – union in the service of the Queen of Cities.

Conclusion: empire, evidence, and *oikoumene*

The major *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, with its conspicuous surfeit of visual material, weaves a dense web of sacro-imperial associations. Vasily I Dmitrievič is pictured on the right of the *sakkos* as the husband of Lithuanian-born Sophia Vitovtova, whose marriage united Moscow and Lithuania dynastically, and as the father of Anna, whose marriage joined the Muscovite royal house to the Palaiologoi of Constantinople. This same Dmitrievič had earlier opposed the liturgical celebration of the Emperor Manuel II and had received Patriarch Anthony's letter pointedly reminding him there could be no faith without the emperor. The program of the *sakkos* in many ways parallels the patriarch's letter visually, for, beyond celebrating princely unions, it too articulates the universality of the Byzantine Empire

when he was living in the Studite monastery in 1387. See Obolensky, "“Philorhomaioi Anthropos,”" 96–7.

as the divinely sanctioned vehicle for the transmission of Orthodoxy. The source of the faith that united both Lithuanian and Muscovite claims was Constantinople and the empire headed by the future John VIII Palaiologos.

Patriarch Anthony's letter to Dmitrievič has generally been taken as a sign of the great distance between the timeless Byzantine ideal and the unfortunate realities of the late Byzantine period. It presents a vision of imperium profoundly disconnected with contemporary realities. The emperor, according to the text, "enjoys such great authority over all that even the Latins themselves, who are not in communion with our church, render him the same honor and submission which they did in the old days when they were united with us."¹⁶⁴ Such a patently false statement is introduced by the patriarch in order to bolster an argument about the universal empire headed by the emperor of the Romans and the eternal harmony between sacerdotal and imperial authority. His was not the only official voice to proclaim this appeal to tradition, as Jonathan Shepard points out, and, despite variation, the message was consistent: "the faith was best kept pure within the longstanding imperial Roman order."¹⁶⁵

This chapter opened with the patriarch's letter in order to introduce the distinction between reflecting power and compensating for its lack. In closing, I now return to this methodological distinction. Scholars have generally read the *sakkos* as a reflection of the social relations between Moscow and Constantinople, as if the gold and gem-encrusted ritual vestment were but a mere document.¹⁶⁶ Along this line of thought, Obolensky read the presence of the contemporary Byzantine and Muscovite portraits as sure proof that the tensions between the Byzantine emperor and Dmitrievič were resolved, "and that the Russians had reverted to their former belief that the emperor of Constantinople enjoyed the supreme position in the Christian Orthodox community of nations."¹⁶⁷ Accordingly, he proposed that the hierarchical distinctions evident between the royal couples on the front hem of the *sakkos* – such as the presence and absence of a halo – imply that the Muscovy court acknowledged the difference in status.¹⁶⁸ This position fails to appreciate the fundamental cleavage between Byzantine intention

¹⁶⁴ Trans. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, 143; Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca* II, 190–1. Again, the cautionary words of Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 100–11, should be taken into consideration.

¹⁶⁵ Shepard, "Byzantium's Overlapping Circles," 4.

¹⁶⁶ Note that Meyendorff's "Three Lithuanian Martyrs," 180, describes the Slavonic vita of the martyrs of Vilna, Balsamon's encomium, and the major *sakkos* as "documents."

¹⁶⁷ Obolensky, "Some Notes," 146.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 145. See note 85 above where the passage is cited in full.

and Muscovite reception. Alternatively, Meyendorff read the *sakkos* as a reflection of Byzantine religious and political ideology more broadly, and the ecclesiastical program of Cyprian and Photios more specifically. Accordingly, he proposed that the iconography of the Lithuanian martyrs on the *sakkos* brings to Moscow the following clear message: “loyalty to the Byzantine Commonwealth is a condition for the maintenance and progress of Orthodox Christianity in the whole of Russia, both in Muscovy and in the Lithuanian-held territories.”¹⁶⁹ This, he claims, was the agenda promoted by Cyprian and inherited by Photios. Such an argument presents the imagery of the *sakkos* too starkly as ecclesiastical propaganda devoid of nuance.

Both these positions bear further implications for our understanding of what Obolensky has famously called the “Byzantine Commonwealth.” For methodological reasons succinctly summarized by Christian Raffensperger, the idea of a Byzantine commonwealth, where Slavic regions fit as mere adjuncts to Byzantium, should not be embraced as the explanatory model for the more complex multi-faceted relationship among the Orthodox *oikoumene*.¹⁷⁰ Raffensperger has recast Obolensky’s commonwealth as the “Byzantine Ideal,” in which the Byzantines maintained their belief in the imperial familial hierarchy (and the emperor’s fundamental superiority) even when others did not share that belief, and certainly long after the imperial reach and sway was considerably diminished. This important shift in terminology recognizes the potential discrepancy between Byzantine belief and political reality as well as the shifting vicissitudes of power.

The circulation of the imperial image as a gift is central to the production and maintenance of Byzantine ideology, and also offers insight into this disjunction between belief and reality. From the Byzantine perspective, the gift of the imperial image expresses the desire for allegiance. Receiving such a gift, however, does not necessarily imply acceptance or subservience. A comparison of the “major” *sakkos* of Photios and the Royal Crown of Hungary proves instructive in this regard (Figures 5.6–5.7). They both present an image of the timeless imperial familial hierarchy in which Hungarian and Muscovite royal figures respectively are included in the Byzantine family of

¹⁶⁹ Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 257–8.

¹⁷⁰ For a critique of Obolensky’s model on historiographic and methodological grounds, see Christian Raffensperger, “Revisiting the Idea of the Byzantine Commonwealth,” *ByzF*, 28 (2004), 159–74. See also these two important essays: Franklin, “The Empire of the *Rhomaioi*” on this question of the “universalist claims of Byzantium” and the very different Kievan worldview; and Shepard, “Byzantium’s Overlapping Circles,” which re-evaluates Obolensky’s *Byzantine Commonwealth*.

princes, but with the foreign representatives clearly relegated to junior status within the family. Such a visual logic illuminates the Byzantine imperial worldview, but in no way does it imply that this vision was shared by the rulers of Buda or Moscow.

Such gifts tell us more about Byzantine beliefs than social realities. The *sakkos* makes visible the belief that the source of Orthodoxy remained steadfastly imperial Constantinople despite the precarious state of the capital, and that imperium and Orthodoxy remained inseparable despite recent challenges. As the patriarch's letter to Dmitrievič suggests, this particular facet of Byzantine ideology was in need of bolstering in Moscow. The subsequent gift of the major *sakkos* serves this purpose, acting as a reminder that the divinely sanctioned source for Orthodoxy continued to be the Byzantine capital of Constantinople headed by the future John VIII. The gift, in other words, was designed to compensate for the fragility of the imperial office in Moscow. This message, however, is conveyed in predominantly Orthodox visual terms. On the surface, the vestment presents a straightforward vision of the Orthodox faith much like the "minor" *sakkos* of Photios. Both *sakkoi* represent the main iconography that would have lined the interior of the typical Byzantine church and thus inscribe the body of the metropolitan as the architecture of the church in a very real and a metaphorical sense. But the "major" *sakkos* further situates its wearer as the minister not only of the sacred mysteries but also of diplomatic and imperial matters. Only upon close inspection does the complicated politically charged message of divinely sanctioned authority centered in imperial Constantinople emerge.

Ultimately I see the *sakkos* as a visual articulation of the kind of imperial ideology conveyed in the patriarch's letter rather than a reflection of Muscovite subservience to imperial Constantinople as envisioned by Obolensky. At the same time as it indexes Byzantine desire more than political realities, I see its message as more complicated and multi-layered than the straightforward ecclesiastical propaganda proposed by Meyendorff. Like imperial ritual and ceremony, which simultaneously reveal and suture fractures in authority, the major *sakkos* constitutes a gesture of desire on the part of the authorities in Constantinople. It was designed to impress upon its viewers the majesty and sacro-imperial authority of the capital. As this study has emphasized, however, Constantinople at this particular moment was impoverished and under siege, and plans for western support were proving elusive. How can we explain such an extravagant commission at this precarious moment? And how can we explain sending it to Moscow, where it was only to be worn three times a year? Such extravagance, moreover, follows a mere decade after the urgent request for a fundraising mission among

the flock of the Russian metropolitan. Recall that the patriarch's letter to Metropolitan Cyprian, Photios's predecessor, stressed monetary donation for Constantinople as more important than almsgiving and ransoming Christian captives.¹⁷¹

One thing is certain: the extravagance of the *sakkos* cannot be taken as evidence for the actual wealth of the capital. But if we understand the *sakkos* as a gift – inflected with the burdens of reciprocity and hierarchy – we approach an answer to these questions. To understand the *sakkos* as a gift is to shift the emphasis away from an articulation of fixed relations (again where the imagery serves a mere documentary role) and toward a more flexible and even performative model. It is to move the *sakkos* into the register of the optative, where it expresses wish or desire. The necessity to recognize that gifts such as this possess a measure of the optative stems from a wariness of both an evidentiary approach, where the *sakkos* serves as social document alone, and also from a functionalist approach, where it is treated as a uniform devoid of nuance. On one level the vestment does fulfill its function as a liturgical uniform of sorts. Like a uniform, it was “issued” with the intention of visibly marking the wearer's allegiance and rank and function. Again, only the highest church official had the privilege of wearing the *sakkos* and its imagery directly underscores the liturgical role of the metropolitan as minister of the sacred. The *sakkos*, however, exceeds this functional role by virtue of its extravagance and virtuosity.¹⁷² Its surfeit of sumptuousness, and its complicated subtext of hierarchy, distinguishes it from other extant Byzantine liturgical vestments, and places it on another level – a level, I maintain, of the gift and the mode of the optative.

Drenched in iconographic complexity and encrusted in silver and gold, the vestment was made in the impoverished imperial capital and sent to the metropolitan in Moscow, the ranking ecclesiastical official who was appointed directly by the patriarch of Constantinople. Beyond embodying the church hierarchy in Moscow, the metropolitan was the very official who had negotiated the marriage of the Muscovite princess to the heir to the imperial throne, and his predecessor has been described as a collecting agent for the imperial administration. One cannot easily disentangle these different facets of the office: the metropolitan was spiritual, diplomatic, and

¹⁷¹ See the discussion earlier in the chapter.

¹⁷² On the extravagance of later Byzantine liturgical vestments and their “conspicuous luxury,” see Woodfin, *Embodied Icon*, 92. Mary W. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade, and Power* (Austin, 1993) is also important with regard to technology and power, and her study informs James Trilling's “Daedalus and the Nightingale: Art and Technology in the Myth of the Byzantine Court” in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture*, 217–31.

fiscal intermediary at once. The *sakkos* mediates such a dense network of allegiance on multiple levels as only a gift can. It is deeply entangled in ritual systems of reciprocity and is neither free nor disinterested. Moreover, it was created to be worn with its message not merely directed toward its wearer but to those fortunate enough to behold it. The *sakkos*, then, is as much about perceiving as it is about giving or receiving.

Conclusion: the ends of empire

This book ends before the fall of Constantinople and the final days of the Byzantine Empire. It deliberately does not conclude with the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the resulting reconstitution of the Byzantine imperial city as the Ottoman capital,¹ or with the debate about the persistence of Byzantine traditions in Russia as the “Third Rome” after the fall of the Second Rome.² By avoiding explicit engagement with the formal end of the Byzantine Empire, this book insists that the concept of decline be detached from the expectation of inevitable fall.³

Another topic not covered in this study is the Union of Churches at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439. The substantial Byzantine delegation, which included Emperor John VIII Palaiologos and Patriarch Joseph II, spent more than two years in Europe, traveling from Venice to Ferrara to Florence and back to Constantinople via Venice again.⁴ This omission may seem surprising given that the prolonged Italian–Byzantine contact

¹ This is an area of intensely productive and innovative research. Çiğdem Kafescioğlu’s *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park, 2009) represents a particularly important study of the early Ottoman reconceptions of the imperial city under Mehmed II. See also the succinct overview by Gülru Necipoğlu, “From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II” in *From Byzantium to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital City* (Istanbul, 2010), 262–77.

² The idea of Moscow rising from the ashes of Constantinople as the “Third Rome” owes its notoriety to the sixteenth-century monk Philotheus of Pskov. The well-known passage, cited in Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, 44, reads: “The Church of old Rome fell for its heresy; the gates of the second Rome, Constantinople, were hewn down by the axes of the infidel Turks; but the Church of Moscow, the Church of new Rome, shines brighter than the sun in the whole universe.” Most recently, Donald Ostrowski provides a critical survey of the history of this debate in “‘Moscow the Third Rome’ as Historical Ghost” in Brooks (ed.), *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, 170–9.

³ See note 48 in the Introduction concerning the historiography of this point.

⁴ The Byzantine delegation, with more than 600 participants, was funded by the Pope. Joseph Gill’s studies *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959) and *Personalities of the Council of Florence and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1964) provide the principal historical outline for the Council. See also Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church: From Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (Oxford, 2005). In Venice, the the Byzantine delegation was shown the Treasury of San Marco with its rich holdings of deluxe *ars sacra* looted from Constantinople’s sacred sites after the Fourth Crusade. Sylvester Syropoulos recounts a particularly vivid description of this encounter. See V. Laurent, *Les ‘Mémoires’ de*

afforded by the Council inspired some of the most striking images of the penultimate Byzantine emperor by Italian artists, including Pisanello's eyewitness sketches of the emperor and the altogether novel but decidedly non-Byzantine bronze portrait medallion, and the life-size bust attributed to Filarete.⁵ Though fascinating in their own right, the choice to omit these images stems from their profound difference from the Byzantine icons of imperium analyzed in this book.⁶ The Italian renderings, which betray a sense of exoticism in their fascination with the intricacies of eastern imperial dress and accessories, tell us more about the western perception of Byzantium at this time.⁷ This book, by contrast, has remained firmly rooted

Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438–1439) (Paris, 1971); and J. L. van Dieten, "Sylvester Syropoulos und die Vorgeschichte von Ferrara-Florence," *Annuario historiae conciliorum*, 9 (1977), 154–79.

⁵ First-hand renderings of the emperor appear in Pisanello's sketchbook, now divided between the Louvre and the Art Institute of Chicago, most recently published with bibliography in *BFP*, 527–31 (cat. nos. 318A and B). Scholarship on the bronze portrait medallions of the emperor includes the following: Roberto Weiss, *Pisanello's Medallion of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus* (London, 1966); *BFP*, 355–6 (cat. no. 321); Stephen K. Scher (ed.), *The Currency of Fame* (New York, 1994), 44–6 (cat. no. 4); Luke Syson and Dillian Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court* (London, 2001), 29, 31–4; John Graham Pollard, *Renaissance Medals, I: Italy* (Washington DC, 2007), 4–6 (cat. no. 1); and Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann (eds.), *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini* (New Haven, 2011). What is presumed to be a preparatory drawing for the medallions survives in the Louvre, on which see *BFP*, 532–3 (cat. no. 319) with bibliography. See also Michael Vickers, "Some Preparatory Drawings for Pisanello's Medallion of John VIII Palaeologus," *ArtB*, 60(3) (1978), 417–24. I would like to thank Stephen Scher for sharing with me his extensive knowledge of this topic. In addition to the Vatican's bronze bust of John VIII attributed to Filarete – on which see *BFP*, 534 (cat. no. 320) – the Byzantine emperor is depicted as part of a cycle of the Council of Florence on Filarete's bronze doors of St Peter's, on which see John R. Spencer, "Filarete's Bronze Doors at St Peter's: A Cooperative Project with Complications of Chronology and Technique" in Wendy Stedman Sheard and John T. Paoletti (eds.), *Collaboration in Italian Renaissance Art* (New Haven, 1978), 33–57. One final image merits mention within this context – that of the emperor pasted into a manuscript in the Monastery of St Catherine at Sinai (Sinai Gr. 2123), which appears to be based on the Italian portrait medallions. See Giancarlo Prato and J. A. M. Sonderkamp, "Libro, testo, miniature: il caso del cod. Sinait. gr. 2123," *Scrittura e Civiltà*, 9 (1985), 309–23.

⁶ The rich corpus of western images of John VIII Palaiologos associated with the Council complements his three known Byzantine images discussed throughout this study – that is, on the *pyxis* in Dumbarton Oaks (discussed in the Introduction to Part II), the imperial family portrait in the Louvre copy of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* (Chapter 4), and the lower hem of the "major" *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios (Chapter 5). These extant Byzantine representations were all executed while John was still the junior emperor, in contrast to the western images of him as the reigning emperor of Byzantium. Note also John VIII's gold seal; see *BFP*, 35 (cat. no. 8).

⁷ Parani, "Cultural Identity and Dress," rightly points out the antiquity of Byzantine ceremonial dress as understood by the Italians (i.e., the "exotic" dress was perceived not only as eastern but also as venerable). Even before the Council of Florence, the Byzantine emperor's ceremonial attire seems to have made a profound impact on the western imagination. Joyce Kubinski, "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cit   des

in the Byzantine perspective and has focused on the Byzantine cultivation and dissemination of imperial ideology in the final centuries of the empire. To conclude on any other note would stress the empire's final demise, which this book attempts to suspend momentarily so as to grasp more fully the Palaiologan material on its own terms and without the bias of hindsight. For these reasons, there is no coda or afterword for this study. Instead, these final pages summarize the book's more salient points and gather together some final strands of thought about the sovereignty of imperial image and the authority of the gift in later Byzantium.

This book has traced the diplomatic mobilization of the imperial image in the face of the diminished political realities of the later Byzantine period. The premise, logic, and mechanisms of prestation remained largely consistent throughout the Byzantine Empire despite the waning of political power in its final centuries. This consistency is largely due to the deeply entrenched system of precedence predicated on the ideology of *taxis*, or "order." *Taxis* constituted the organizing principle for the imperial hierarchy in reflection of the heavenly kingdom, and thus rendered earthly vicissitudes part of an immutable and eternal divine plan. A facet of this worldview found its expression in the Pseudo-Dionysian theology described in Chapter 4, which structured the Byzantine universe as a precisely ordered schema of hierarchically interconnected emanations from God. Again, according to Dionysian thought, motion animated these hierarchical emanations so that the instantaneous cyclical movements of "procession" downward and "return" upward elevated those in the lowest rung toward the higher contemplation of the divine.⁸ Both of these seemingly eternal structures of thought served as the ideological foundation for the ecclesiastical hierarchy and for the imperial administration and court. Those outside the ever-shifting boundaries of Byzantium, however, did not necessarily share this ideology, and by the later Byzantine period, the contrast between the Byzantine universe predicated on hierarchical order and the increasingly cosmopolitan surrounding world was thrown into sharper contrast. It is precisely this disjunction – as it is exacerbated in the later Byzantine period – that has motivated the narrative of the present inquiry. It has been my aim to demonstrate how the fragile political realities of the later Byzantine period inflect and were, in turn, inflected

Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)," *Gesta*, 40(2) (2001), 161–80, points out that the increased "orientalizing" dress in French early fifteenth-century miniature painting results from the Battle of Nikopolos (1396) and from Manuel II's stay in Paris (1400–2).

⁸ See the discussion in Chapter 4.

by long-held and seemingly immutable assumptions about imperium. The preceding chapters have thus traced the visual recalibrations of the imperial image in response to the constricted realities of the period, including political factionalism, the waning of Byzantine economic influence, and the corresponding increase in Ottoman power. Linking these straitened circumstances to concrete moments and matters of gift exchange has allowed me to clarify the central alignment of the imperial image and the gift in the maintenance of the Byzantine ideal even, and especially, in turbulent times.

In the early Palaiologan period, the subject of the book's first half, the configuration of imperial imagery was closely tied to a larger project of restoration, reclamation, and legitimacy. The image of Michael VIII on the silk in Genoa, the subject of Chapter 1, was literally extended as a gift in conjunction with the diplomatic efforts to restore the capital city to Byzantine rule, and thereafter we see a concerted effort to legitimize Palaiologan authority in visual terms through the vocabulary of gift-giving, which offered the ideal strategy for conveying authority through seeming humility. Such was the agenda in the heart of Constantinople where the emperor's bronze monument, as discussed in Chapter 2, showcased his status as the restorer of the Queen of Cities in the venerable format and medium of antiquity while simultaneously attributing his restoration to divine plan through the new combined iconography of *proskynesis* and prestation. The positioning of a model of the city in the emperor's hands emphasizes his role in the restoration, but by casting him in the act of offering it to the archangel as a gift, the bronze ultimately constitutes a monument of thanksgiving and a public articulation of his humility and piety. A similar message is conveyed by the earliest Palaiologan gold coins issued in the restored capital, as seen in Chapter 3. The *hyperpyron*'s displacement of the city from the emperor's hands on the reverse to the Virgin's frame on the obverse attributes Constantinople's reconquest and protection to divine power, not mortal might. This message is emphasized in contemporary sources, in which Constantinople is conceptualized as a gift from God returned to the Romans through divine grace, not terrestrial strategies.⁹ Accordingly, the coinage stresses the emperor's role in the restoration as instrumental rather than causal.

In addition to stressing imperial instrumentality, Michael VIII's bronze and gold effigies emphatically construct a venerable genealogy of the first Palaiologoi linked back to the Komnenoi and further to Constantine the

⁹ See the discussion at the beginning of Chapter 2.

Great, while simultaneously charting a future dynastic agenda that legitimates the new imperial line. Adopting and adapting previous hallowed visual conventions in the service of contemporary urgencies, the early Palaiologan imperial image ultimately inverts traditional conventions for imperial representation in order to create an image of divinely sanctioned imperial thanksgiving.

If the mobilization of these early Palaiologan imperial images is intimately tied to the restoration of Byzantine Constantinople and the resulting sense of dynastic legitimation that it confirmed, the later Palaiologan imagery discussed in the second half of the book engages a set of related though distinct concerns, and it is here that the concept of decline comes more forcefully to the fore. The combined devastation of the mid-fourteenth-century civil wars and the Ottoman advances and blockade of the capital later in the century bequeathed a world vastly different from the recently restored imperial capital of the first Palaiologoi. In other words, issues relating to the legitimacy of the Palaiologan line were of less importance than the securing of tangible support to defend Constantinople from the Ottomans. In this later Palaiologan period, there are no significant public monuments in Constantinople and no innovative designs in coinage to propagate imperial ideologies – there is, in fact, no gold coinage at all. By the fifteenth century, belief in the imperial ideal was increasingly at odds with an impoverished reality, but the gift of the image of the emperor still aimed at consolidating imperial authority. When the empire's domain is restricted, imperial gifts – and, in particular, the imperial image as a gift – provided the opportunity to promote Byzantine imperium in compensation for those constrictions.

The two lavish gifts discussed in detail in Part II, which follow the protracted Ottoman siege of Constantinople and the emperor's failed diplomatic mission in the West, are indicative of this compensatory dimension. The "major" *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios, the subject of Chapter 5, with its message of inexorable imperial and Orthodox unity, was sent to Moscow at roughly the same time that the copy of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite, discussed in Chapter 4, was sent to Paris as a reminder of the Byzantine genealogy of Dionysian thought. Taken together, these gifts cultivate radically different but ultimately complementary facets of later Byzantine ideology: Hellenism and Orthodoxy. More specifically, they align the imperial office with these fundamental facets by picturing imperial Constantinople – in the form of the imperial body – as the source for both. These two sumptuous gifts thus index a larger diplomatic agenda that strategically fosters cultural connections with the West and that strengthens the fabric

of Orthodoxy within the wider *oikoumene*. Both the *Corpus Dionysiacum* and the *sakkos*, despite – or, more accurately, because of – the impoverished economic and political standing of the empire, project the sacro-imperial majesty of Constantinople as the source of Neoplatonic thought and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

One of the more important points to emerge from this study concerns the way that gifts and gift-giving strategies adopt a posture of ostensive obsequiousness in order to disguise implied Byzantine hierarchy. This layering of flattery over superiority turns out to be one of the key defining features of the Byzantine gift. All of this book's chapters have shown how gift-giving conveys messages of imperial superiority, or the belief in the eternal Byzantine ideal, through subtle rhetorical strategies. The visual program of the *peplos* in Genoa, for example, caters to its intended recipients by including Latin inscriptions for the iconography of the Genoese church's titular saint, Lawrence. But beneath this imagery, which should be pleasing to the Genoese, lies a deeper message of Byzantine superiority: the central scene of the emperor inaugurates a series of juxtapositions with the surrounding hagiographic narrative that ultimately celebrate the authority of Byzantine imperial transaction. In other words, the central episode of apparent Byzantine–Genoese *philia*, with the emperor led by St Lawrence into his church and the intended repository of the silk, serves to imply difference and hierarchy. In this context, Holobolos's description of the silken imperial image for the Genoese as a *pharmakon* is pointedly astute: the gift of the emperor's image is the remedy for their ardent love, but it is also double-edged, ultimately implying Byzantine superiority.¹⁰

Beneath the surface of shared symbolic language, an underlying dynamic of superiority – and often not a subtle one – informs the rhetoric of the gift. In a manner similar to the terms in which Émile Benveniste discusses Indo-European etymology,¹¹ gifts from Byzantium articulate an essential

¹⁰ While I have chosen to underscore this point about gifts and hierarchy with an example of a gift proper, the *peplos* in Genoa, the same holds true for the wider visual culture of gift-giving. The point could equally be made with reference to the bronze and gold commemorations of the restoration of Constantinople where Michael VIII is portrayed on knee in a gesture of humility and piety in order to convey, ultimately, the divinely sanctioned nature of Palaiologan rule. This, in other words, is humility in the service of supremacy; it is the same logic of doubleness.

¹¹ Émile Benveniste, "Gift and Exchange" in Schrift (ed.), *The Logic of the Gift*, 33–42. The concluding line of Robin Cormack, "But is it Art?", 228, is instructive in this regard: "The favour of a gift of art, like diplomatic ritual, aimed to flatter enemies into respect." Anthropologists have long argued for the dangerous aspect of the gift: like the Trojan horse, gifts are to be desired, but that desire attaches to potential risk.

and contradictory double valence of self-interest and seeming disinterest, and also of superiority and mutuality.¹² Were the dominant message one of superiority and self-interest, the gift would lose its potency as an agent of social bond. A successful gift must read, on the surface at least, as an articulation of mutuality or respect. The two early fifteenth-century objects discussed in the second half of the book illustrate this doubleness particularly well.

Manuel II's gift of the writings of Dionysios the Areopagite appears to be a gesture of commonality and appreciation, especially given the history of the hagiographic assimilation of St Dionysios and St Denis in France. But the manuscript situates the emperor and the empire he headed as the source of the Areopagite's writings and, in so doing, it ascribes a Byzantine origin for the French saint. Situated within a much longer temporal span that reaches into the distant and more recent past, the Louvre codex also suggests a future imperative. It draws into alignment the previous imperial gift of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* and related hagiographic assimilation as well as the emperor's personal visit to Paris, where again he even celebrated mass at the Abbey of Saint-Denis, all with the purpose of inspiring future action, namely support for Constantinople.¹³ While ostensibly a commemoration of intertwined Dionysian hagiography and philosophy, the gift remains decidedly self-interested in its insistence on Byzantine origins, and does so as part of a future-driven strategy.

Similarly, the "major" *sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios emphasizes first and foremost the Orthodox faith and its liturgical expression shared in Byzantium and Russia. The *sakkos* translates the pictorial cycle of the typical Byzantine church walls, icons, and iconostases to the body of the metropolitan who enacted its symbolism through liturgical ritual. While primarily celebrating Constantinople and Moscow united in faith through its wearer, the celebrant, this vision of ecumenicity is complicated by the hierarchical implications of the vestment's hem. Even when considering the hem in isolation, the initial impression is one of commonality by virtue of the very inclusion of the Muscovite royal effigies and local martyrs. Upon closer inspection, however, a message of Byzantine superiority emerges, both in terms of dynastic and ecclesiastical authority. The imagery of the hem co-opts the local Lithuanian martyrs by calling them Russian, but it does so

¹² See the Introduction.

¹³ Again, as part of this future-driven temporal sequence, Chapter 4 presents the book in Paris as part of the scholarly activities and peripatetic diplomatic fundraising of Chrysoloras, and thus presents it as part of a wider promotion of Greek in Italy.

in Greek and thus signals Constantinople as the site for the authentication and veneration of their relics. The more obvious expression of hierarchy on the *sakkos*, however, involves the royal effigies framing these martyrs, all of which underscore clear and unmistakable differences in status between the Palaiologan and Muscovite courts. As a visual response to previous instability in the office of the metropolitan, the *sakkos* mediates the intertwined ecclesiastical and dynastic networks in an attempt to strengthen ties among the Orthodox *oikoumene*.

The visual program of both early fifteenth-century gifts emphasizes the mutual traditions shared by both giver and receiver, but such mutuality works in the service of the giver's self-interest. Each gift was given with the aim of getting. Although apparently catering to their destination on the surface, they ultimately celebrate imperial Constantinople and the procession of sacro-imperial power. In this regard, they are easily contextualized within the elaborate fundraising missions of the imperial capital. What is particular to the late Byzantine gift, as opposed to the gift in earlier periods, is the fact that the posture of entreaty that simultaneously encodes imperial authority refers to a potency that is no longer real.

Byzantine gifts were deployed to garner allegiance with those outside the empire's ever-shifting boundaries as well as within the capital city, where ceremonial gift-giving ritually re-inscribed the contours of the imperial office. Although the instillation of imperial ideology through prestation may appear static because of its consistency, it has in fact a critical temporal dimension, the importance of which can be elucidated through Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of the gift. Time – with its unpredictable rhythms and gaps and its irreversibility – plays a decisive role in the nature and logic of the gift for Bourdieu. His insistence on the interval and delay in time destabilizes the neat cyclicity of gift exchange envisioned by structuralist anthropologists:

It is the lapse of time between gift and counter-gift that makes it possible to mask the contradictions between the experienced (or desired) truth of the gift as a generous, gratuitous, unrequited act, and the truth that emerges from the model which makes it a stage in a relationship of exchanges that transcends singular acts of exchange.¹⁴

A significant departure from Marcel Mauss's somewhat mechanical model of prestation, then, is the way that time disguises the strategy or self-interest

¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "Marginalia – Some Additional Notes on the Gift" in Schrift (ed.), *The Logic of the Gift*, 231.

in the gift sequence; it allows each moment of gifting to appear as an isolated moment of true generosity rather than as part of a longer calculated strategic pattern.¹⁵ The appearance of generosity thus conceals self-interest.

Moreover, for Bourdieu, gift-giving, with its more attenuated temporal dimensions, becomes a regime of self- and collective deception. Gifting, for Bourdieu, is ultimately a means of denying objective truths:

Gift exchange is one of the social games that cannot be played unless the players refuse to acknowledge the objective truth of the game, the very truth that objective analysis brings to light, and unless they are predisposed to contribute, with their efforts, their marks of care and attention, and their time, to the production of collective misrecognition.¹⁶

Bourdieu's account of the fundamental power of such strategies for putting objective truth into abeyance resonates strongly for the present study of art and diplomacy in the Palaiologan period. If we substitute what this study understands as the constricted political and economic circumstances of the later Byzantine period for Bourdieu's abstraction of "objective truth," his description of gift exchange could serve as a primer for the Palaiologan period: it exposes the productivity of the gift for the study of culture in an age of decline.

Scholars have often lamented that despite an awareness of the dire realities of the later Byzantine period, the imperial administration maintained an air of impassive detachment. The letters of Manuel II discussed in Chapter 4 elucidate this point particularly well. The emperor's scholarly and epistolary activity is characterized as disingenuous escapism in the face of Ottoman aggression. "It was," Dennis suspects, "one way of closing one's eyes to the reality and living in an illusion."¹⁷ If, however, we follow Bourdieu and accept that gifting constitutes a powerful strategy for

¹⁵ Note that Bourdieu links his understanding about self-deception to Marcel Mauss's point about society paying itself in the "counterfeit coin of its dreams," cited at the beginning of Chapter 3, which Bourdieu characterizes as "one of the most profound sentences that an anthropologist has ever written" (*ibid.*, 231).

¹⁶ Bourdieu, "The Work of Time," from *The Logic of Practice*, reprinted in Schrift (ed.), *The Logic of the Gift*, 198. Similarly, he writes: "Gift exchange is the paradigm of all the operations through which symbolic alchemy produces the reality-denying reality that the collective consciousness aims at as a collectively produced, sustained and maintained misrecognition of the 'objective truth'" (203). With regard to Bourdieu and Byzantium, see Anthony Cutler, "Uses of Luxury: On the Functions of Consumption and Symbolic Capital in Byzantine Culture" in Guillou and Durand (eds.), *Byzance et les images*, 287–327.

¹⁷ Dennis, "Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality," 135.

what he calls “collective misrecognition,” the optic of the gift helps to clarify the logic of such seeming passivity in later Byzantine recalibrations of sovereignty. Bourdieu helps us recognize that what might be dismissed as escapism constitutes a strategic and effective way of establishing heightened possibilities for action within the context of diminished political and economic influence. Recall that the epistolary exchange between Manuel II and Chrysoloras with which Chapter 4 concluded emphasizes the potential political advantage of the promotion of Byzantine (Greek) cultural production.

In the face of decline, gift-giving emerges, then, as a means of action within the tight constraints of a much-diminished Byzantine world. The effectiveness of this strategy lies, in part, in the fact of its traditionalism. Byzantine prestation had always been integral to the performance of imperial authority. In Constantinople, systems of largesse governed the court hierarchy and ecclesiastical relations, and within the wider diplomatic arena, the maintenance of relations with Byzantium’s neighbors depended on gift exchange. Bourdieu’s model helps to elucidate this. The emperor distributed *apokombia*, silk, and court titles from his own hand as a ritual performance of largesse and dependence.¹⁸ These actions – and their subsequent representation, as seen, for example, in the upper-gallery mosaics at Hagia Sophia (Figures 0.1–0.3) – inscribed the emperor’s superiority through ritual gifting. Accordingly, the emperor and his courtiers, the “players” in Bourdieu’s parlance, refuse to acknowledge the objective truth of their mutual dependence so as to produce “collective misrecognition”: by casting salary distribution as the ceremonial offering of a gift, they conceal the truth of the transactional logic and create a symbolic enactment of interdependence.

These observations hold true more generally for systems of largesse in the middle and later Byzantine period. In the final centuries of the empire, however, gifting assumes a further urgency as it becomes increasingly difficult to deny the declining political sway of the empire. Dependence on symbolic logic to conceal objective realities increases as those realities worsen. Gift exchange, in other words, as the ultimate act of self- and communal deception, constitutes an ideal coping strategy. Because of their doubleness, gifts,

¹⁸ The *Kleterologion* of Philotheos illustrates this point very well. See Nicolas Oikonomides (ed.), *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles* (Paris, 1972), 88–99. In addition to the earlier discussion of *apokombia* distribution, see Oikonomides, “Title and Income at the Byzantine Court,” 199–215; and Kazhdan and McCormick, “The Social World of the Byzantine Court,” 167–98.

even recycled ones, have the potential to enact social bonds while simultaneously conveying an ideology of superiority. For this reason, the display of confidence and the projection of power in diminished circumstances, this book has argued, are impossible without reference to the symbolic logic of gift exchange.

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